

TIME



‘THIS WAR WILL NOT END FOR ME’

Sylvia Gutierrez’s son was among the last of the 2,461 U.S. troops killed in Afghanistan. After 20 years of combat, a family’s grief endures

By W.J. Hennigan

PLUS

A nation’s women in peril

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Courtney Willis provides respiration therapy to Nelson Alexis III, 17, at Children's Hospital New Orleans, on Aug. 20

Photograph by Kathleen Flynn for TIME

Conversation



WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT...

THE GOOD COP Molly Ball's profile of D.C. police officer Michael Fanone in TIME's Aug. 23/Aug. 30 issue—which recounted his role in confronting the Jan. 6 Capitol riot and detailed the PTSD he now grapples with—inspired an outpouring of support. “We don’t expect to worry about our government being overthrown,” wrote Gretchen Leuenberger of Monticello, Ind., “yet on Jan. 6, we could have faced that reality if it weren’t for heroes like Mike Fanone.” Nadia El-Badry of Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., described Ball’s piece as “the most visceral story I have ever read,” adding that she was “haunted by what [Fanone] and other officers lived through.” And Bill Vroom of Jackson, N.J., said he “truly believes that Mr. Fanone and all his fellow officers may have saved American democracy.”

“We need and deserve an unvarnished accounting of how something like this can occur,” wrote John Schmidt of Ridge, N.Y., arguing the polarized response to Fanone’s decision to speak out “captures the worst of political partisanship in this country.” “History is certain to judge his many detractors for their anti-Americanism,” added Oren Speigler of Peters Township, Pa. Others felt Fanone’s story is historic in its own right: “I would like for Mr. Fanone to know that his experience was not in vain,” wrote Karen Wartick of Mesa, Ariz., “and that he is being heard.”

‘Those who are vilifying heroes like Mike Fanone need to crawl back into their dark caves.’

BONNIE SKLAREN, Gulfport, Fla.

‘Please stay strong and continue to tell what happened to you and your fellow officers.’

ROBIN RUST, Columbia, Mo.



March Through Time

Download *March Through Time* on the *Fortnite* gaming platform to celebrate the 1963 March on Washington and the history of the civil rights movement. Developed in partnership with Fortnite Creative, *March Through Time* allows *Fortnite* players to view Martin Luther King Jr.’s famed “I Have a Dream” speech and participate in educational mini-games. For more information, visit time.com/the-march



TIME100 Chosen by TIME’s editors, this year’s TIME100 list of the most influential people of 2021 will be revealed on Sept. 15. But there’s still time to have your say: cast your vote in the reader poll for the world leaders and luminaries you think wielded the greatest influence this year at time.com/time-100-reader-poll-2021. The poll’s results will be released in early September on TIME.com.



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ON THE COVERS:



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‘Britney Spears will not be bullied or extorted by her father.’

MATHEW ROSENGART, Spears’ lawyer, in a statement on his Aug. 30 court filings demanding Spears’ father resign without payment as the conservator of his daughter’s estate



\$200

The monthly insurance surcharge Delta employees will be asked to pay if they are not vaccinated against COVID-19, the airline announced Aug. 25

3

Number of hours a week during which minors in China will be allowed to play online games, starting Sept. 1; the new policy will be one of the strictest facing the gaming industry

‘I HAVE THREE ALTERNATIVES FOR MY FUTURE: BEING ARRESTED, KILLED OR VICTORY.’

JAIR BOLSONARO, Brazilian President, speaking Aug. 28 about next year’s election

‘They’re the 21st century, digital version of snake-oil salesmen.’

DR. IRWIN REDLENER, founding director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness, on the political group America’s Frontline Doctors, which a TIME investigation found was selling access to prescriptions for the anti-parasitic drug ivermectin to treat COVID-19, despite medical authorities’ warnings



GOOD NEWS
of the week

Astronaut Megan McArthur celebrated her 50th birthday in style, after a supply ship docked Aug. 30 at the International Space Station, bringing cookies and other gifts

‘Deeply troubling.’

THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY, reacting in a new report to North Korea’s apparent restart of its main nuclear reactor at Yongbyon in July

‘It’s no secret that the governor and I were not close.’

KATHY HOCHUL, New York governor, speaking to a local reporter on Aug. 23 about her predecessor, Andrew Cuomo, who resigned after an investigation found he had sexually harassed women

The Brief

An aerial night photograph of a residential neighborhood in Louisiana after Hurricane Ida. A street is completely flooded, reflecting the headlights of several cars. A power pole has snapped and is leaning precariously over the water. Houses and trees are visible in the background under a dark, cloudy sky.

TROUBLED WATERS
Hurricane Ida left
Louisiana with flooding—
and a new strain on
an already burdened
medical system

INSIDE

CHINA'S CLIMATE PLEDGES
CLASH WITH ITS POWER PLANS

BEHIND THE CONTENT
WHIPLASH AT ONLYFANS

REMEMBERING ED ASNER'S
CURMUDGEONLY PASSION

PHOTOGRAPH BY LUKE SHARRETT

The Brief is reported by Eloise Barry, Paulina Cachero, Madeleine Carlisle, Tara Law, Sanya Mansoor, Ciara Nugent and Billy Perrigo

TheBrief Opener

HEALTH

No port in a pandemic

By Alice Park

WITH HURRICANE IDA THREATENING massive flooding, high winds and power outages on Louisiana's Gulf Coast, administrators at Marrero Healthcare Center, located in Lafourche Parish just northeast of where the Category 4 storm would soon make landfall, decided on Aug. 26 that it was time to leave.

Two days of hurried packing later, at noon, dozens of residents from the nursing and rehabilitation center piled onto two school buses for a 4 hr. 40 min. ride inland; 21 who are bedbound were transported in a large emergency vehicle, in bunks stacked three high. Another bus transported medical supplies and equipment as well as food for the trip. For part of the caravan, the journey ultimately took up to seven hours as thousands of others likewise fled the southeastern coast, packing the highways leading inland.

"It's so hard on the elderly folks, many of them, just to travel for an hour or two in a car. But to travel on a stretcher for six hours?" says Elizabeth Dowden, nursing-home director for Many Healthcare North, the residents' new temporary home. "That's a strong generation. Very little complaints, and they did well."

How well the rest of the local medical ecosystem will fare is a larger question. Any natural disaster strains health resources, and Louisiana's medical community braced for the inevitable surge in emergency-room visits as people injured in the storm, or those seeking medical care they couldn't get during the peak of the crisis, rushed to hospitals. But this time, health care workers were also wary of an additional burden. With only 41% of Louisiana residents vaccinated against COVID-19, the Delta variant has been spreading as quickly as Ida's floodwaters; weeks before the storm struck, the state recorded its highest daily number of new cases since the pandemic began.

Since August, about 15% of daily COVID-19 tests in the state have come up positive on average, and 88% of the state's ICU beds are occupied, about half of them by COVID-19 patients. Ida didn't change any of those realities but only temporarily put them out of mind as more urgent needs took precedence—and in a state familiar with just how dire posthurricane health care can get, COVID-19 raised the stakes even more.

AS SOON AS IDA MOVED ON, the dual challenge of shouldering anticipated storm-related health emergencies and COVID-19 care loomed large for the area's

hospitals. A day after the storm made landfall in Louisiana, the state's largest nonprofit, academic health care system and its 40 hospitals remained on emergency power and water supplies. With no water provided through the New Orleans municipal system, Ochsner Health System's main hospital in the city relied on its own well, maintained for such emergency situations. Ochsner CEO Warner Thomas said during a briefing that many of the network's facilities experienced roof damage and water leaks, and nearly 100 patients from three hospitals, two in the Bayou region, were evacuated. Emergency rooms at all facilities have remained open, and patients have already started to pour in—with COVID-19, storm-related injuries, heart attacks and strokes. So far, care for the 772 COVID-19 patients hospitalized at Ochsner's facilities hasn't been affected, but because those patients are occupying so many of the system's critical-care beds, its ability to accept transfers from other Ida-damaged facilities is limited.

At North Oaks Health System, based in Hammond, a city between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, elective procedures were paused on July 11 to accommodate the surge of COVID-19 patients admitted to the hospital. That pause was supposed to lift the last week of August, says CEO Michele Kidd Sutton, but Ida had other plans. As of Aug. 31, North Oaks was running on generator power and focusing on emergency care. The storm also knocked out the hospital's phone system, which meant staff couldn't call the families of COVID-19 patients to update them on their loved ones' conditions. "Many people are just coming up to the front door and asking for updates," Sutton says.

For many medical centers, the biggest challenges in the days after Ida hit were related to staffing, and helping employees whose own homes were damaged by the storm. Ochsner's New Orleans hospital is serving as both convenience store and hardware store for its hardest-hit workers, providing essentials for personal care and home repair. The medical center also secured several hundred hotel rooms for employees whose homes aren't habitable.

Despite the challenges, Thomas is confident that Ochsner's system will weather the storm without compromising patient care. As of this writing, Ida hasn't directly caused any patient or staff injuries, according to Thomas, and contractors have already started repairs on damaged roofs and leaky ceilings at various facilities. But as people return to their damaged homes, weather-recovery injuries will likely continue to mount. And once people start coming back to evacuated areas, SARS-CoV-2 is waiting to continue its relentless mission of infection as well. For Louisiana's hospitals, this respite may just be the calm before the next storm. —*With reporting by* JAMIE DUCHARME *and* TARA LAW/NEW YORK

**150
m.p.h.**

The highest wind speeds from Hurricane Ida as it tore through Louisiana

15%

The average positivity rate for COVID-19 tests in Louisiana during August

2,684

Number of COVID-19 patients in Louisiana hospitals, 479 of whom were on ventilators, as of Aug. 31



*Respiratory therapist
Diane Gelpi treats
2-month-old Carvase
Perrilloux Jr. at
CHNO on Aug. 20*

The Delta variant is pushing pediatric hospitals to the brink

By Jamie Ducharme/New Orleans

AUG. 20 WAS A GOOD DAY IN THE pediatric intensive-care unit at Children’s Hospital New Orleans (CHNO). Carvase Perrilloux Jr., a 2-month-old who’d come in about a week earlier with respiratory syncytial virus and COVID-19, was ready to breathe without the ventilator keeping his tiny body alive. “You did it!” nurses cooed as they removed the tube from his airway and he took his first solo gasp, bare toes kicking. On the floor below, Quintetta Edwards was preparing for her 17-year-old son, Nelson Alexis III, to be discharged after more than two weeks in the hospital with COVID-19—first in the ICU, then in acute care. “Fortunately, he never regressed,” Edwards said, standing outside Nelson’s room, the door marked with signs warning of potential COVID-19 exposure. “He’s progressing, slowly but surely.”

The nurses and doctors who care for the sickest patients at CHNO have to take the good where they can these

days. Seventy pediatric COVID-19 patients ended up in treatment at CHNO during the 30 days ending Aug. 23. Before this summer, the hospital had never cared for more than seven COVID-19 patients at a time; on any given day in August, that number was at least in the midteens, enough that the facility called in a medical team from Rhode Island to help manage the surge. CHNO also implemented an incentive program to encourage current staff nurses to pick up extra shifts, and hired about 150 new nurses.

Then, of course, Hurricane Ida tore into Louisiana, temporarily forcing CHNO to run on generator power, cancel elective procedures and keep essential staff in the hospital 24/7. There were a few scary moments—the ceiling sprang minor leaks, and wind gusts were so powerful at one point that

the elevators couldn’t fight against them to travel upward—but the hospital’s staff pressed on.

While the hurricane made CHNO’s work uniquely challenging, many pediatric hospitals are struggling to treat the number of young patients developing severe cases of COVID-19 as the

Delta variant continues to spread. Each day during the week ending Aug. 29, an average of 360 children were admitted to a U.S. hospital with COVID-19—a record high during the pandemic. And unlike during previous spikes, infections have been clustered largely in states with low vaccine coverage, meaning hospitals in states like Louisiana, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama and Texas are drown-

ing. “Our hospital system across Alabama is beyond capacity,” says Dr. David Kimberlin, co-director of the division

‘Doctors are doing CPR in the back of pickup trucks.’

DR. DAVID KIMBERLIN, pediatric infectious disease physician at Children’s of Alabama hospital

The Brief

of pediatric infectious diseases at Children's of Alabama. "Doctors are doing CPR in the back of pickup trucks."

This grim scenario may seem shocking, given one of the pandemic's long-standing silver linings: that children, for the most part, are spared from the worst of COVID-19. About 425 kids nationwide have died from COVID-19 since the pandemic began, and most pediatric hospitals have seen no more than a handful of patients at a time—a data point that makes the current surge in the South and parts of the Midwest especially unnerving.

Fewer than 2% of children who have caught COVID-19 during this wave have landed in the hospital—roughly the same percentage as during earlier phases of the pandemic, according to a TIME analysis of American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services data. The difference seems to be that the highly contagious Delta strain is tearing through all demographic groups at a furious clip, currently contributing to the 150,000 infections reported in the U.S. on any given day. It's a depressing numbers game: if 100 children become infected, one or two might end up in the hospital. Push the caseload up to 200,000—the number of kids diagnosed with the virus nationwide during the week ending Aug. 26—and at least 2,000 are likely to get sick enough to need hospitalization.

In large part that's because without authorized vaccines for those under 12, children who have not previously been infected have no immunity against SARS-CoV-2, meaning the virus effectively has free rein among America's 50 million youngest residents. Even among older children, vaccination rates are low: just 37% of 12- to 15-year-olds and 46% of 16- and 17-year-olds are fully vaccinated, according to federal data.

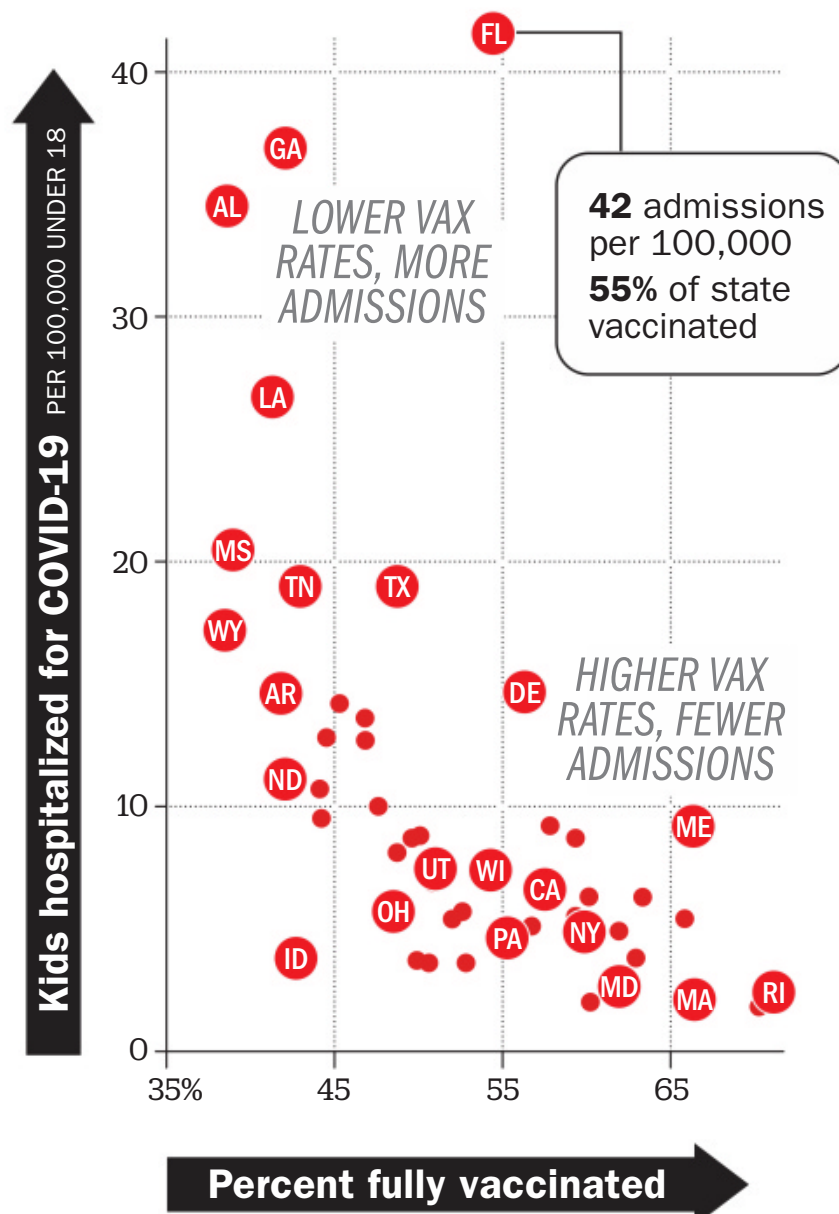
There's also a reason pediatric ICUs are currently full in Tennessee and Texas but not in Maryland and Massachusetts. In each of the latter two states, more than 60% of residents are fully vaccinated; in the former, the number is below 50%. There are exceptions—pediatric hospitalizations are ticking up in California and New York, two states with high vaccine coverage—and no one

can predict what the virus will do in the future. But it stands to reason that more kids are getting sick in states like Louisiana, where only about 41% of the population is fully vaccinated. "Kids don't tend to drive what's going on; they tend to reflect what's going on in the surrounding community," says Dr. Sean O'Leary, vice chair of the AAP committee on infectious diseases.

That children are largely at the mercy of the adults in their communities is one of the cruelest quirks of this surge. "It's hard, because you don't want to be judgmental" of people who haven't gotten the shot, says Dr. Michael Blancaneaux,

The case for vaxxing

Pediatric hospitalizations hit record highs in August—a trend driven by states with low vaccination rates



NOTES: PEDIATRIC ADMISSIONS BETWEEN AUG. 1 AND AUG. 30 FOR CONFIRMED CASES OF COVID-19. COMPLETED VACCINATION RATE AS OF AUG. 31. SOURCES: HHS; CENSUS; JHU

an emergency-medicine physician at CHNO. But it's also clear, he says, that the decisions of unvaccinated adults are endangering the lives of children. For the doctors who treat young patients—and who are exhausted from worrying about COVID-19 for what, as Blancaneaux says, feels like forever—learning that their families are unvaccinated, or failing to take other precautions, is a bitter pill to swallow. A sign hanging in CHNO's emergency-department

bathroom directs staff to "wipe away tears" before returning to work.

Hurricane Ida only added to that burden. The hospital's core team of 700 went into lockdown inside the facility to ensure the storm didn't interrupt patient care, and to keep staff safe. Staffers, in some cases, slept on air mattresses in offices or in quiet corners of patient wards. Before the hurricane, nurses joked that they practically lived at the hospital; for a few days, they really did.

SINCE VACCINES for the youngest Americans may not be available until late 2021 or early 2022, the work isn't likely to let up soon. For right now, the immediate battle is in persuading adults to get their shots. Delta seems to be scaring at least some holdouts into action. On average, more than 730,000 people in the U.S. are now getting a COVID-19 vaccine each day, a higher number than the country has reported since June. But there's a long way to go, and not a lot of time to travel it.

Particularly in areas where infection rates are high, health officials must encourage people to go back to basics, the AAP's O'Leary says. "Use the mitigation measures we know work," he says. "Wear masks when you're around other people, particularly in enclosed spaces [and] avoid places where lots of people are congregating." With post-storm shelters set up around Louisiana, that may be easier said than done.

Unless health officials can persuade a tired and disillusioned populace to return to precautions they wanted to leave in the past, COVID-19 will keep spreading. A small number of patients, no matter how young, will land in the hospital. And day after day, health care workers will don their gas-mask-like respirators, gowns and goggles to care for them.

The staff at CHNO makes a valiant effort to stay positive and keep smiling beneath their masks. But Blancaneaux admits it can be difficult this far into a pandemic, when tools are available to fight it. "Everyone is frustrated and worn out and upset," he says. "You feel unsupported by the public because we keep fighting against it. And a large part of it is preventable." —With reporting by EMILY BARONE/NEW YORK

NEWS TICKER

Duterte plans to run for Vice President

Rodrigo Duterte, President of the Philippines, said on Aug. 24 that **he would run for the country's vice presidency after his six-year term ends** in 2022. His critics see the move as a bid to maintain power—and to avoid prosecution for the thousands of extrajudicial killings that have marked his war on drugs.

FBI reports increase in hate crimes

With more than 7,700 incidents documented in 2020—an increase of 6% over the previous year—the FBI recorded a **12-year high for American hate crimes**.

The agency noted in a report released Aug. 30 that more than 50% of race-related hate crimes involved bias against Black people or African Americans.

Haiti in need after deadly earthquake

Two weeks after a **7.2-magnitude earthquake struck Haiti** on Aug. 14, leaving at least 2,207 dead, relief efforts had shifted from search-and-rescue to helping survivors in the areas hardest hit, disaster-response workers told the AP. It was the deadliest natural disaster to strike the nation since the 2010 earthquake.



UP STRONG Bo Kramer, representing the Netherlands, takes a shot against Spanish player Isabel Lopez Chavez during a women's wheelchair basketball game at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games on Aug. 29. Even though underlying health issues mean that some Paralympic athletes face a higher risk from COVID-19—and with the pandemic already straining Japan's medical system—the Games drew a record number of participants.

THE BULLETIN

China makes coal-powered plans, even as it promises a greener future

WHILE LEADERS AROUND THE WORLD talk about a post-pandemic “green recovery,” China has outlined plans to build 43 new coal-fired power plants, according to an Aug. 13 report from Global Energy Monitor and the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. The new projects, announced in the first half of 2021, would add 1.25% to China's annual carbon-dioxide output—despite the country's pledge to be carbon neutral by 2060.

BURNING FOR GROWTH China, while not alone in its reliance on coal, built more than three times as much new coal-power capacity as all other countries in the world combined in 2020. The plans for new coal-power plants show that at least some Chinese officials are prioritizing economic growth over emissions reductions. “There is this desire in the Chinese political and economic system to keep on building, to continue the infrastructure fever,” says Li Shuo, a senior global policy adviser for Greenpeace in Beijing.

POWER PLAY Despite the news, analysts say they are still optimistic that China will reach its climate targets. The world's biggest polluter has pledged to reduce its energy intensity (measured by comparing total energy consumed to GDP) and its carbon intensity (the carbon dioxide produced per dollar of GDP) by 2025. Chinese President Xi Jinping said in April the country will also reduce coal use beginning in 2026.

FORECAST: CLEARING China is already out in front on key green technologies, like electric vehicles, and accounted for about 50% of the world's growth in renewable-energy capacity in 2020. And its growth in carbon-dioxide emissions slowed in the second quarter of 2021. “I think that it's clear that there's already a shift from the runaway expansion of all kinds of industry and construction that we've seen for the past year and a bit,” says Lauri Myllyvirta, an analyst who worked on the coal-fired power plant report, “to trying to at least moderate the pace.” —AMY GUNIA

NEWS TICKER

Texas law strictly limits abortions

As of Sept. 1, a Texas law **banned abortion as early as six weeks, before many people are aware they're pregnant.** The law faced challenges even as it took effect, but legal experts said its unusual structure—it enables private citizens to sue anyone who helps someone else get an abortion—may make it more difficult to defeat in court.

E.U. may reimpose U.S. travel limits

The European Union agreed on Aug. 30 to reimpose COVID-19 travel restrictions on U.S. travelers, in response to rising rates of infection. E.U. member states ultimately set their own travel rules, but the decision to **remove the U.S. from a list of safe countries** was made unanimously.

Mask bans trigger civil rights probe

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights opened an investigation on Aug. 30 into five GOP-led states that banned mask requirements in schools. The DOE argues the bans **discriminate against students with disabilities and underlying health conditions.**

GOOD QUESTION

Why did OnlyFans ban sexually explicit content, then U-turn?

ONLYFANS, THE SUBSCRIBER-BASED SOCIAL media platform, sparked outrage last month when it announced it would ban “sexually explicit” content starting Oct. 1. The platform, on which 2 million content creators charge subscribers for access to exclusive photos and videos, attributed the decision to pressure from banks and payment processors.

OnlyFans' popularity took off during the pandemic, as the site's user base rose from fewer than 20 million to 130 million and transactions increased at least sevenfold, passing \$2.3 billion. While the service was not originally designed for adult content, the user-friendly interface and subscriber model has made it an attractive destination for sex workers.

So when OnlyFans announced the ban on Aug. 19, it threw the livelihoods of its core creator community into jeopardy. Many sex workers say they lost subscriptions overnight.

In an interview with the *Financial Times*, OnlyFans' British founder and chief executive Tim Stokely singled out BNY Mellon, Metro Bank and JPMorgan Chase for blocking intermediary payments, preventing sex workers from receiving their earnings, and penalizing businesses that support sex workers. “The short answer is

banks,” he said, explaining the decision.

The pressure from those financial institutions follows similar behavior by payment-service providers that have expressed concerns that illegal content, such as child sex abuse, is appearing alongside porn on mainstream adult-content websites. In April of this year, for example, Mastercard announced tighter control on transactions involving adult content, in an effort to clamp down on illegal material. Those new controls will become effective in October—and many observers saw OnlyFans' actions, which would have come into effect at the beginning of October, as an attempt to get ahead of the expected policy change.

And yet, only six days after the initial announcement, OnlyFans made a U-turn.

The company tweeted on Aug. 25 that it was suspending its ban, having “secured assurances necessary to support our diverse creator community.” According to the *Financial Times*, Stokely's comments had sparked open discussion between banks and the company.

Still, while OnlyFans creators are now free to continue to sell sexually explicit content to users on the platform, some sex workers say they feel betrayed by the company and have vowed not to return to the platform.

If anything, the company's actions have emphasized the influence of banks and payment-service providers over social media and content-creation platforms online. Mastercard will continue to process payments for sexually explicit content on OnlyFans—at least for now. —ELOISE BARRY

SECOND CHANCES

Trials and errors

Research by an eighth-grade civics class inspired a Massachusetts lawmaker to introduce a bill to officially exonerate a woman who was convicted of witchcraft during the Salem witch trials. Here, three other historical figures whose cases were reconsidered. —Sanya Mansoor

JOAN OF ARC

A little over two decades after the French icon was burned at the stake in 1431—accused of witchcraft and heresy—a retrial led to her being declared innocent of the charges that had led to her death.



OSCAR WILDE

The Irish playwright and novelist, who was jailed for indecency in 1895, was among thousands of gay men pardoned by the U.K. government in 2017 of convictions for violating laws that banned same-sex relations.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY

The suffragist was arrested in 1872 for voting before women were allowed to do so. Former President Donald Trump pardoned her in 2020—though some historians argued that Anthony wouldn't have wanted it.

RECOMMENDED

Parole for **Sirhan**
Sirhan, 77, who was convicted in 1969 of assassinating Senator Robert F. Kennedy, on Aug. 27.

APPEARED

Three men **held at the U.S. military prison in Guantánamo Bay**, in court on Aug. 31, to face charges for deadly attacks in Southeast Asia in the early 2000s. The case got under way 18 years after they were first captured.

PASSED

Wide-ranging voting restrictions, by the Texas Legislature on Aug. 31, ending months of partisan battling during which Democrats fled the state in an attempt to delay the vote.

SET

A **speed limit of 30 km/h (under 20 m.p.h.) in Paris** on Aug. 30, in an attempt by the city to reduce pollution and improve road safety.

PROJECTED

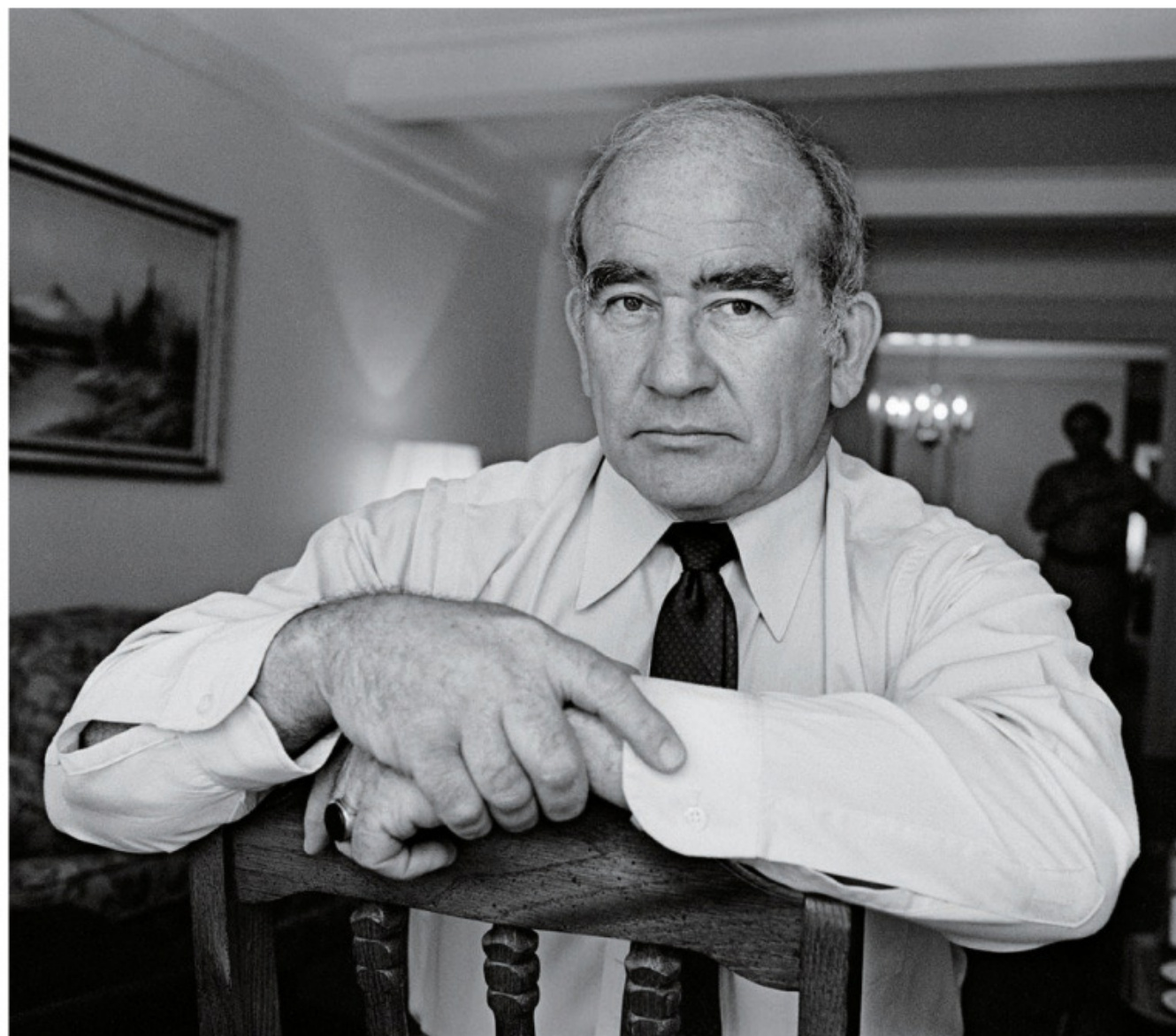
That, unless Congress acts, **Social Security will have to cut benefits by 2034** instead of 2035, per an Aug. 31 report citing, in part, the pandemic.

REMOVED

Paintings and busts of seven past leaders by the Bank of England, the bank said Aug. 27, after a review found they had **connections to the slave trade**.

GROSSED

\$22.3 million by **Candyman**, marking the **first time a film directed by a Black woman hit No. 1** at the box office.



Asner, in New York City in 1980, holds a career record as the male actor to have won the most Emmys for his performances

DIED

Ed Asner

A crusader onscreen and off

FOR AMERICANS OF A CERTAIN AGE, THE ARCHETYPAL journalist looks a lot like Ed Asner. Gruff, temperamental and jaded on the surface, his beloved character Lou Grant—whom he played for seven seasons on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and five on an eponymous spin-off that recast Lou as an L.A. newspaper editor—was, at his core, a principled defender of truth. Asner, who died on Aug. 29 at 91, took home five Emmys for the portrayal, which made him one of just two actors ever to win the award for playing the same character in both a comedy and a drama.

Indelible though it was, the role was just one highlight in a career that spanned seven decades. Raised in an Orthodox Jewish household, Asner drove a taxi and worked on a GM assembly line before breaking into the theater in the mid-1950s. Film roles followed; he first shared the screen with Moore in the 1969 Elvis Presley flick *Change of Habit*. In later years, he became a sought-after voice actor, known for his heart-wrenching turn as a widower in Pixar's *Up*, and the king of the guest arc, in memorable appearances on shows like *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Dead to Me*.

Although he worked until the very end of his life, Asner also found time over the years to advocate for the causes he held dear. A lifelong progressive, he served two terms as the president of the Screen Actors Guild, was a longtime member of the Democratic Socialists of America and often claimed that *Lou Grant's* cancellation was due to his outspoken opposition to the U.S.-backed junta in El Salvador, rather than poor ratings. Whether Lou would have agreed with those views is beside the point. As Asner's performance conveyed, TV's pre-eminent newsman would have defended to the death the actor's right to articulate them.

—JUDY BERMAN

AGREED

Payback for Gavin Grimm

A crucial case

IN 2015, WHEN HE SUED Virginia's Gloucester County school board over its refusal to allow him to use the bathroom consistent with his gender identity, Gavin Grimm was just 16. Six years later, his case is coming to an end, with the school board promising to pay \$1.3 million in legal fees to his representation, the American Civil Liberties Union, per Aug. 26 court filings.

The suit became a center of national attention when a slew of "transgender bathroom bans" were introduced by Republican-controlled state legislatures. The case worked its way up to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declined on June 28 to hear it, affirming a lower court's decision that the policy violated both Title IX and the Constitution. But even as Grimm has cause to celebrate, trans youth in the U.S. still face a range of obstacles, with lawmakers more recently targeting their rights to play sports or receive medical care.

"I hope that this outcome sends a strong message to other school systems," Grimm said on Aug. 26, "that discrimination is an expensive losing battle."

—MADELEINE CARLISLE

Grimm found himself the face of trans students' rights







LightBox

A state on fire

A chairlift, illuminated in a long-exposure photograph, hangs empty as California's Caldor fire spreads through the Sierra-at-Tahoe ski resort on Aug. 29, two days before the blaze forced the first evacuation of South Lake Tahoe. The city would normally be buzzing with tourists, but by Sept. 1, the fire had destroyed over 660 structures and consumed some 190,000 acres. That's just a fraction of the 1.7 million California acres burned so far in this year's fire season, as hot and dry conditions—made more likely by climate change—make it easier for flames to spread. "There is fire activity happening in California that we have never seen before," Thom Porter, chief of the state's department of forestry and fire protection, said on Aug. 31. "For the rest of you in California: every acre can and will burn someday in this state."

Photograph by Noah Berger—AP
► For more of our best photography, visit time.com/lightbox

TIME100

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The View

NATION

THE CITY THAT ENDURES

By Stephanie Zacharek

If New York is a city of reinvention, it's also a place of perpetual wistfulness, of missing people and things that are gone. Every day, even in the best of times, something you love about New York disappears: your favorite restaurant can't hack it; the awesome little card store had to close because people stopped sending cards. ▶

INSIDE

WHAT AMERICA HAS LOST
IN THE 20 YEARS SINCE 9/11

NEVER FORGET, SAYS ACTOR AND FORMER
NYC FIREFIGHTER STEVE BUSCEMI

The View Opener

With life comes attrition. The guy who used to fix your shoes just got old and, one day, he died—there was no one to take over his business. Those of us who live here now, as the city tries to shimmer back to life amid the seemingly endless COVID crisis, feel that toothache of the heart every time we pass one of our many shuttered storefronts. Yet those of us who lived here on 9/11, and continue to live here today, have an advantage: we once saw in our city a smoking hole that also served as a mass grave for lives, and flesh, that had been incinerated in a flash on a gorgeous late-summer day.

Once you've seen what your city can do in the wake of that, you understand it as a place of awe as well as sorrow. Against all odds, it always comes back.

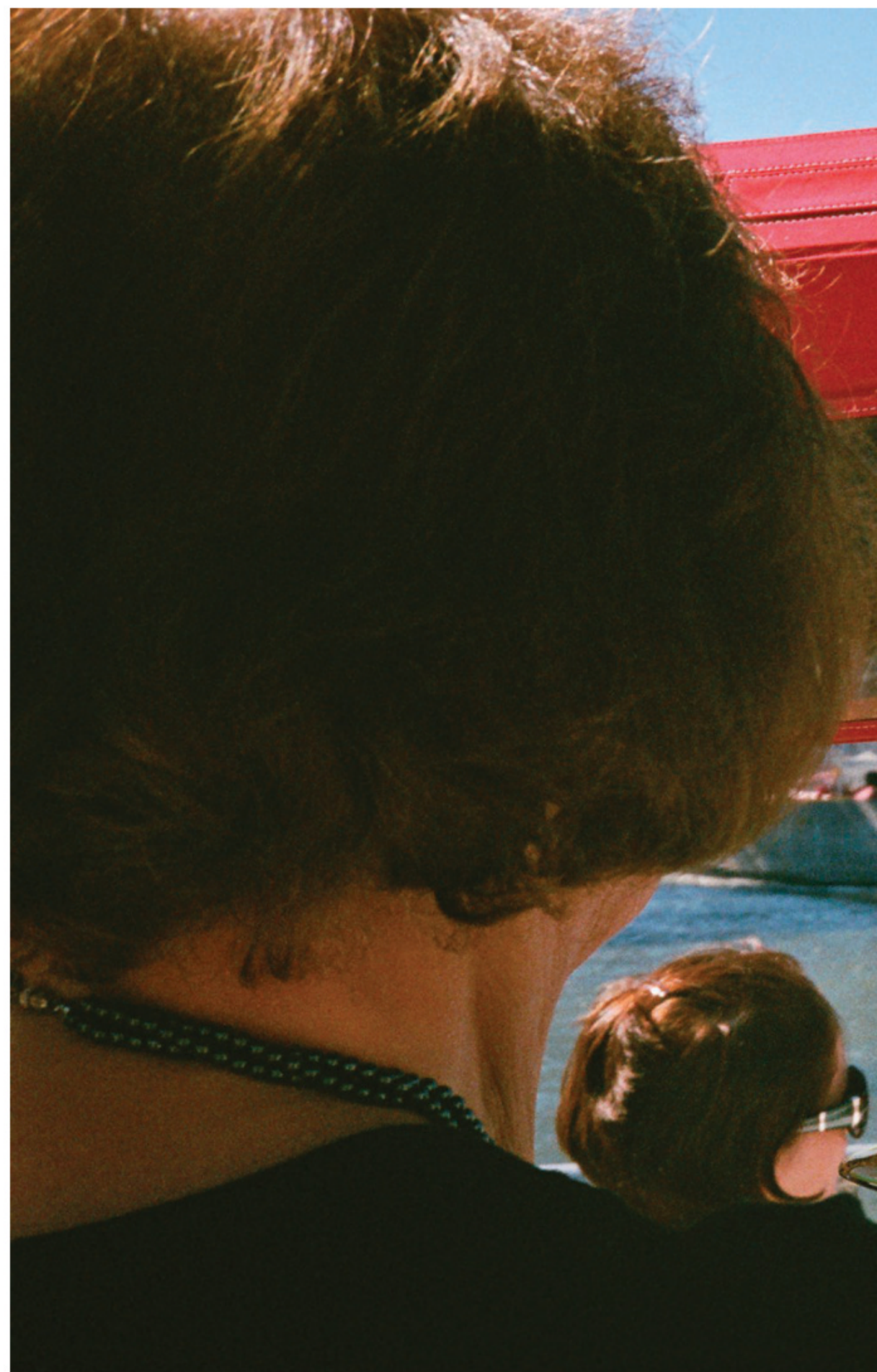
It's true that in addition to boarded-up businesses, we have many ugly things in New York: terrible needle high-rises that splinter our already rather kooky patchwork of a skyline; streets mottled with piles of stinky garbage; a much-relied-upon subway system that's also perpetually on the verge of falling apart. These are things that say to outsiders, "Don't come here, to live or to play." But they're also an unintentionally misleading language, because all of them, even the ugly new buildings, are signs of the city's life, evidence of its growth and change. Its workaday elements—streets and sidewalks as well as subways and buses—get used, and used hard, by its citizens.

We rely on those things, and we rely on one another too, essential truths that we learned after 9/11 even if, in our perpetual coolness—we're Noo Yawkers, after all—we pretend to have forgotten. It's hard to explain to anyone who wasn't here, but the time after 9/11 was a season of undercover tenderness among New Yorkers. You might not come out and ask the stranger next to you, "Are you O.K.?" but you didn't have to—just catching another person's gaze could be enough.

YET IN THE EARLY DAYS of the pandemic—as our hospitals began filling rapidly and our death toll climbed—many New Yorkers seemed unsure how we'd get through, or if we would. Whatever we'd learned from 9/11 seemed lost, or at least obscured. Many people left, for good—this New York, with no Broadway or museums or restaurants, wasn't the New York they knew or wanted to know.

But those of us who stayed stuck around expressly to preserve the New York we knew. This city is haughty and knows its self-worth; it won't miss its traitors. Plus, we don't need their lousy energy. We get enough of that from outsiders who aggressively fail to understand this city, even if they professed sympathy for us after 9/11. I'm often surprised by people's hostility toward New York and New Yorkers. In early April, when we were by far the darkest dot on the country's COVID map, people I love—or used to love—who do not live here said things like, "Well, that's New York." As if, somehow, just by living so close together—a together-apartness that drives us crazy, makes us lonely and is what we live for, all in equal measure—we were asking for death.

What's most astonishing, though, is how much New Yorkers have invested in helping one another survive. When, amid rapidly shifting public guidance, citizens worldwide were told that wearing masks could prevent the spread of the disease, New Yorkers got on board, fast. Sure, there was some early



Photographer David Arnold has been documenting life in New York City since Sept. 11, 2001. Clockwise from top left: A woman takes a photograph from the East River Ferry in September 2013; a man with his tie unfurled crosses the street in downtown Manhattan in August 2021; a visitor pays

tribute to a loved one at the 9/11 memorial on the 19th anniversary of the attacks; pedestrians lean on each other in Chinatown in August 2021; sightseers board a ferry labeled *Miss Freedom* on their way to the Statue of Liberty in August 2021. See more photos at time.com/NYCPhotos



TheView Opener

resistance, and even now you see a few scofflaws on the subway. But in such a huge and diverse city, the level of compliance is both astounding and heartening. Our motivations may not be purely altruistic—many may have their children or at-risk loved ones in mind. Still, New Yorkers inherently understand that a rising tide lifts all boats. And in that way, we hold one another above water.

Even if the threat of the pandemic never disappears completely, it will subside. New Yorkers will come through this too. Those who left, good riddance! And those outsiders who feel the city beckoning, who are ready to accept both its challenges and its pleasures—please come. You'll be welcomed by us lifers and longtimers. New Yorkers who were babies at the time of 9/11 are now grown up, nearly ready to start their adult lives. People who were 20 at the time may be raising children of their own. And those who were middle-aged in 2001 are now thinking about what it will be like to grow old here, a bittersweet mission in a place that changes by the day, if not by the hour. The city doesn't slow down, even when we do.

BUT WE DO HAVE SPACE for memories. A closed restaurant or store or nightclub is never fully forgotten, as long as there is a New Yorker alive who once loved it. We also have our own physical memorial to those who died on 9/11, which, like the buildings that once stood there, divides New Yorkers sharply. Some grumble that it's a tourist attraction, but it's one of my favorite spots in the city. On a hot day, the air around those deep, sloping pools is always at least 10°F cooler. It's a place of true tranquility, of mournful reckoning, an instance of urban planning striking just the right note in the face of a city's overwhelming grief. But as beautiful as it is, I think the truest 9/11 memorial isn't made of granite and water. It's the population of New Yorkers who got one another through that sooty, uncertain time of despair and signed on for anything and everything that might lie ahead. We barely speak to one another, but when we link arms, watch out. The memorial is everyone who stayed. □

THE RISK REPORT

Marking 9/11 with an eye toward the future

By Ian Bremmer



THE LONGEST war in U.S. history has come to a close with scenes of violent chaos from Afghanistan.

The deaths of U.S. service members and fleeing Afghans will give the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks an especially bitter edge. There are also daily reminders of just how much American domestic politics has changed. The animosities that followed the disputed 2000 U.S. presidential election are tame compared with what's happened over the past five years.

As Americans mark this 9/11 anniversary and cast a wary eye toward Afghanistan's future, they should remember that what happens next for that country matters far more for many other countries than for the U.S.; China, Russia, Iran and others will gloat over the withdrawal mess and the U.S. loss of credibility, but they now have many more immediate worries than Americans do.

The U.S. withdrawal and Taliban takeover will pose serious problems for Afghanistan's neighbors. Pakistan's military and religious extremists are delighted to see Afghanistan in the hands of an organization they have supported. But now that they're in charge in Kabul, the Taliban are less dependent on Pakistan's goodwill, particularly because they have more options for cash and other resources (see China, in particular) than they did before NATO arrived in 2001. In addition, Pakistan could soon face a refugee crisis as Afghans flee the Taliban, while extremists within Pakistan could

use the Taliban's victory to boost their own cause.

Vladimir Putin enjoyed the humiliating U.S. retreat. But instability in Afghanistan threatens Russia, which continues to list the Taliban as a terrorist group. The governments of Central Asian states Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are right to fear a potential wave of refugees if anti-Taliban resistance continues to grow in Afghanistan's north.

No country in the neighborhood has changed more over the past 20 years than China, which will now, for the first time, play an active role in trying to keep Afghanistan

stable. Beijing needs to ensure that Afghanistan doesn't become a haven for extremists angered by China's persecuted Uighur ethnic minority and a launchpad for terrorist attacks there or elsewhere in China. Beijing also fears a spillover of violence from Afghanistan into Central Asia, where China has invested

heavily in infrastructure projects.

As Americans pause to reflect on all that's changed inside their country and for the U.S. role in the world over the past 20 years, understanding the limits of U.S. interests in Afghanistan should play a role in how they think about the next 20 years. The greatest failure since 9/11 comes not from the inability to build democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's in the failure of our leaders—and the American people—to carry forward the unity that existed after the attack to help the U.S. build a more perfect union.

It didn't last, of course, but there was a brief moment when Americans were reminded of all they have in common. The question we must answer is whether those days are gone for good. □

It didn't last, but there was a brief moment when Americans were reminded of all they have in common



Firefighters approach the collapsed World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001

The Ground Zero death toll is still climbing

By Steve Buscemi

MY DAD WAS A SANITATION WORKER FOR NEW YORK CITY. HIS message to me and my brothers was, when you turn 18, take whatever civil service test is available. Lucky for me, it was the Fire Department's. I didn't yet know what I wanted to do for a career, but at Engine 55 in Lower Manhattan, I found something even better: a brotherhood. I laid low as a "probie," but by the time my secret other life came out (I'd taken acting classes and dabbled in stand-up), I understood that busting balls is how firefighters express affection. When, after four years on the job, it became impossible to juggle my shifts with both a movie and a play, I took a leave of absence, figuring I'd be back.

Seventeen years later, I was. One of the strongest sensations that flooded over me on Sept. 11, 2001, was that feeling of connection. The next morning, I grabbed my old gear, got a lift to the site and found a place on a bucket brigade. Instead of water going up, it was rubble coming down. Once in a while a body bag was passed, though none weighed much at all. That was disturbing. The dust? It was more of a nuisance: pulverized concrete and who-knows-what that clogged a face mask, so fast you worked better without one. Somebody'd say, "This is probably going to kill us in 20 years."

Well, it didn't take 20 years. Debilitating chronic conditions surfaced before the pile was even cleared. Today more people are thought to have died from toxic exposure at the 9/11 site than died that day. Bridget Gormley, whose father Billy died of cancer in 2015 after working at the WTC for three months, titled her documentary *Dust: The Lingering Legacy of 9/11*. It shows federal, state and city officials trying to project strength by declaring the air around the towers safe. It was of course thick with carcinogens. As an expert in



The author on duty in the early '80s

the film points out, wet cement splashed on human skin will begin to burn into it. But had the truth been shared with the firefighters, I'm pretty sure they would have kept right on working.

It actually felt good to be there. I was on the site for less than a week, but it wasn't until I got home that the magnitude of it all caught up with me. I was already seeing a therapist, and though it was almost impossible to process the enormity of what had happened, just having someone with whom to sit with all the feelings was a consolation. It's not something first responders usually get. Announcing vulnerability

is a hard thing for anyone, but especially for people whose primary identity is as a protector. When in the fall of 2001 a New Yorker named Nancy Carbone went from firehouse to firehouse asking how she could help, one took her aside. "They're hurting," he said. "And they don't know how to talk about it. They don't

know who to talk about it with." So Nancy started Friends of Firefighters, providing free mental-health counseling to the active and the retired and their families. Funded by donations, it operates out of an old Brooklyn firehouse, familiar confines that offer comfort and a kitchen table to hang out around. It will be put to use for years, especially around anniversaries, with the power to trigger emotions.

"NEVER FORGET," everyone said. Some people have no choice. What's surprising is who has to be reminded. Shortly after the attack, Congress created a Victim Compensation Fund to help first responders cope with the aftermath of the day. When the money began to run out, survivors had to launch a lobbying campaign to secure permanent funding, which finally came in 2019. It was an effort led by Jon Stewart and activist John Feal and backed by every former firefighter who cannot laugh without coughing, and every family member who pretends not to notice.

Never forget, because people are still struggling. People are still dying. —As told to KARL VICK

World

2001-2021

THE AFGHAN WAR

What women stand to lose under Taliban rule

BY ZAHRA NADER AND AMIE FERRIS-ROTMAN

The consequences of President Biden's choice

BY BRIAN BENNETT

A Gold Star family's grief

BY W.J. HENNIGAN

The lessons left unlearned

BY JAMES STAVRIDIS

With reporting by Alejandro de la Garza, Nik Popli, Simmone Shah and Julia Zorthian

کابل ته ښه راغلاست

Welcome to

Members of the Badri 313 Battalion, a group of Taliban fighters tasked with securing Hamid Karzai International Airport and the surrounding area, during evening prayers in Kabul on Aug. 28. After a frantic push to airlift some 124,000 people out of Kabul, the U.S. left the airport to its enemy at month's end

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM HUYLEBROEK—
THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX



FREEDOM AT STAKE

What Afghan women stand
to lose under the Taliban

BY ZAHRA NADER AND
AMIE FERRIS-ROTMAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KIANA HAYERI

WHEN TALIBAN FIGHTERS ENCROACHED ON THE Afghan capital on Aug. 15, Zainab, a reporter in her mid-20s, made a decision to leave the country. She had never been abroad, but it did not deter her. If anything, it propelled her forward.

She threw some clothes into a bag, along with her passport, two mobile phones and a wad of cash, before climbing into a taxi with her brother and father. They set off for the airport. Cars full of people gridlocked Kabul's streets as thousands attempted to flee an Afghanistan soon to be under Taliban control. Afghans had watched in disbelief as major provincial capitals fell swiftly to the Taliban over a matter of days, and Kabul soon swelled with people seeking shelter.

Zainab, who does not want her last name published for security reasons and her family's safety, has reported for U.S., British and German media—and was working on a months-long assignment for the Fuller Project and TIME when the Taliban seized control. She worried her work with foreign media would make her a target for the insurgents, and she feared for her life.

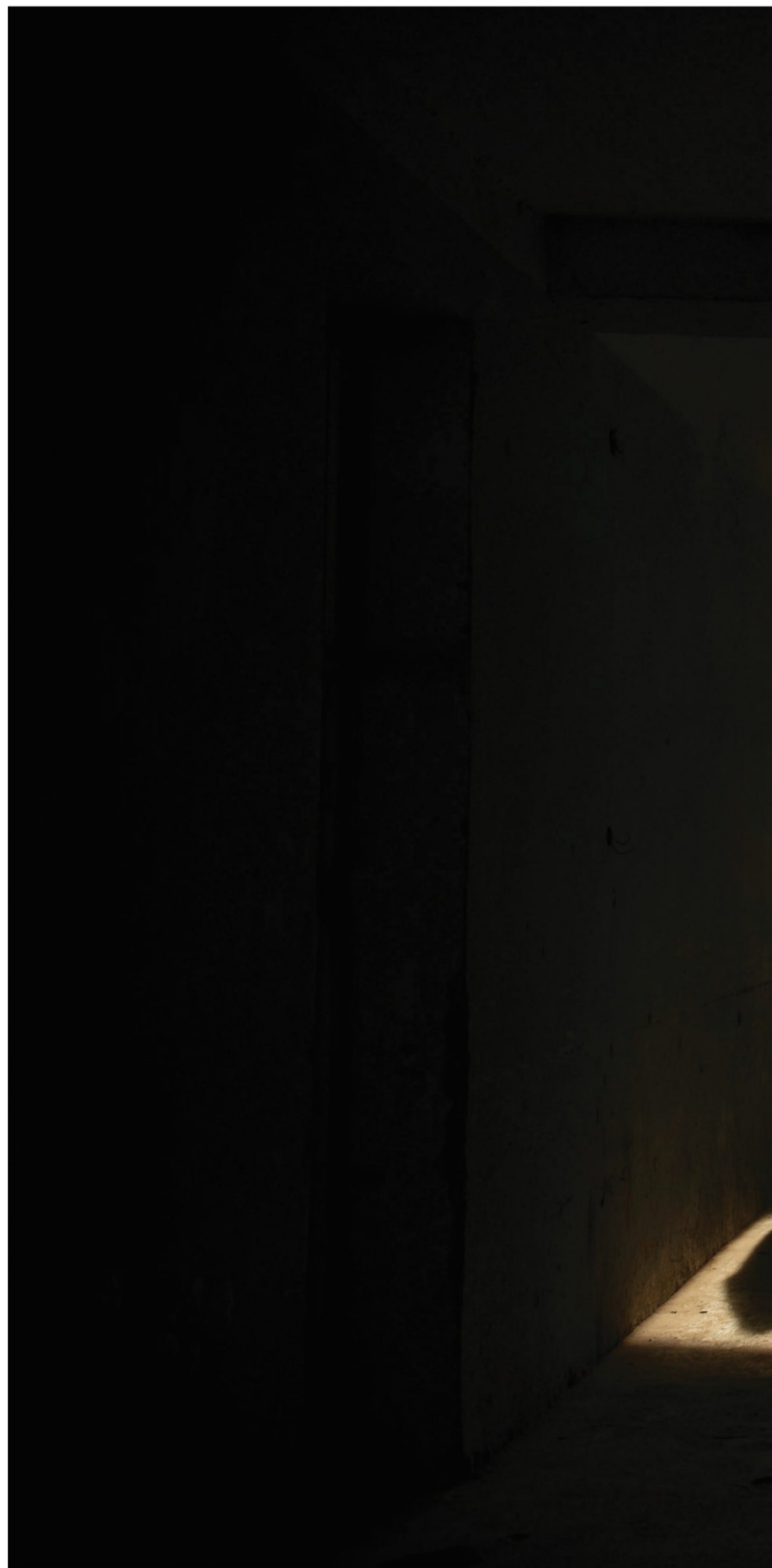
As she was on her way to the airport, several men on motorcycles weaved through the traffic before stopping at her car. They pointed their automatic rifles at the occupants, ordering everyone out. The men then robbed Zainab of the bag she had packed hours before. “They took everything. I was so scared, but I thought, Now what if the Taliban comes for me?” she said.

So she kept going.

They made it to the airport. Zainab said goodbye to her family and stepped inside, where she waited for hours, without any identification or proof of who she was. As dusk arrived, the Taliban did too, and soon shot at the large crowds that had gathered.

“People were running in all directions. I got on a plane, not even knowing where it was going.” It was cavernous and crammed with Afghan families, standing up and jostling for room. Zainab had boarded the now famous U.S. Air Force C-17 that has become symbolic of the desperate end of the American

Published in partnership with Rukhshana Media, an Afghan women's media organization, and the Fuller Project, a global nonprofit newsroom reporting on issues that affect women



war. Photos from inside the jam-packed flight spoke volumes about what had been at stake during two decades of war. With the Taliban back in power, those who remain in Afghanistan brace for an uncertain future, waiting to discover what they have lost. Over the past 20 years, women have filled university hallways, lined offices, traveled freely across the nation and farther afield, and joined nearly every aspect of public life. They have joined the military, judiciary systems and government. The list of their achievements is anything but exhaustive: Afghan women and girls have formed a national cricket team, competed



in the Olympics and won international science competitions.

All would have been unthinkable under the group's previous rule, from 1996 to 2001, when women faced draconian treatment: forced to wear a burqa outside, required to travel with a male relative escort, and denied rights to education and work.

After the Taliban returned in August, the international community implored the group to uphold human rights,

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High school students at Marshal Dostum School in Sheberghan in May. Three months later, the city fell to the Taliban

especially those of women. Improving the plight of Afghan women and girls was a central message of the U.S.-led war. Since 2002, Washington has spent at least \$787 million on attempting to better their lives.

The extremist group has positioned itself as a transformed force, and said it won't pursue reprisals against the Afghan government and its supporters. "Everyone is forgiven," said Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid after the group took control. But many Afghans fear it will return to its



brutal and oppressive past.

The spokesperson also said the Taliban will respect women's rights "within Islam," though this leaves much to interpretation, and evidence of diminished freedoms is mounting. As the Taliban swept back to power in recent weeks, its fighters have turned women away from their workplaces and barred them from entering universities.

Many women fear reprisals. In Kabul, several Afghan female journalists said Talibs were in their neighborhoods, going door to door, making lists of women who worked in the media and government. One sent a video she captured from her balcony, showing armed Taliban members atop her neighbors' house, where they took selfies against the Kabul skyline. "I feel like I will die a gradual death here," she wrote in a message.

German state-owned broadcaster Deutsche Welle said the Taliban had targeted and killed a relative of one of its reporters. Salima Mazari, a female district governor who took up arms against the Taliban in recent months, was reportedly captured by the insurgents shortly after they took power, and her current whereabouts are unknown. Many previously outspoken and prominent Afghan women, including former politicians, rights advocates and famous authors, both in and outside of the country, declined to speak even anonymously.

The women in Afghanistan who did agree to speak described feeling abandoned and betrayed by the world, and especially by the U.S. Sportswomen are burning their jerseys, journalists are scrubbing their social media presence, and Kabul's streets are increasingly devoid of women.

"The U.S. is taking back what it gave us," said Hosni, 30,

Women in a camp for the displaced in Jowzan, Afghanistan, where the Taliban banned girls from attending school

who has worked for a Western-funded NGO for five years in Kabul and asked to be identified only by her first name. "What happens to women? We feel we have lost everything," she said.

Before Kabul fell, a usual day for Hosni would include visiting the gym after a day at the office, or meeting friends for coffee inside one of the city's trendy cafés, pockets of calm and sanctuary where young women could freely socialize.

Today, her office is shut and she sits at home, directionless. "I cannot even watch a movie, I've hidden my books, I can't dance or listen to music. I haven't done any of this in the past days."

Practically overnight, Lida, 32, has gone from being part of a small cadre of women at the Afghan Attorney General's Office to mourning her career. "With the Taliban back in power, everything will die for women," said Lida, who asked to be identified by a pseudonym because of security concerns.

The anticorruption prosecutor completed her master's degree last year, with a specialty in criminology. "All that I have worked for, all of my dreams, have become zero, multiplied by more zeroes," she said.

As the Taliban inched closer to Kabul, Lida headed to the market in search of "clothes that will keep me safe from the Taliban's lashes." When they ruled in the 1990s, Taliban police would whip women for not being properly covered up. In recent days, Afghan social media has swirled with photos of men and women, showing fresh welts from being beaten by Taliban mobs for not dressing according to Islamic custom.

The Taliban is now seeking legitimacy on a global scale, and there are signs it is getting closer. After Kabul fell, Russia and



China, two of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, hinted they are open to the idea of recognition. The U.S. and its Western allies have said such recognition would be dependent on the group's respect for human rights.

But it is still unclear just how much political leverage and heft the rest of the world will have. "The most important question is whether women are going to be fighting this alone, or whether the international community has their back. That is the very least they deserve," said Heather Barr, interim co-director of the Women's Rights Division at Human Rights Watch.

THERE IS A GREEN SHOOT of hope, offering a challenge to the Taliban's leadership: Afghan youth. The country has one of the world's youngest populations: 63% are under 25, meaning most Afghans don't remember life under the Taliban. "This younger generation is saying, 'I'm not going to go back.' They're very determined, a force to be reckoned with," Barr said.

Some of that translates into fierce defiance. In the days following the Taliban takeover, Afghan female journalists interviewed members of the Taliban on live TV and in the open air. Women also led protests in Kabul, draping themselves in the black, red and green colors of the Afghan national flag, which the Taliban wants to replace with its own, a white banner with a black Islamic inscription. They have confronted armed members of the Taliban and demanded their hard-won gains be preserved, holding up handwritten messages scrawled on sheets of paper and chanting, "Work, education and political participation is our right!"

^
*People line up to gain access
to Kabul's international airport on
Aug. 15, ahead of the Taliban's arrival*

Many young Afghan women, especially those who are educated, grew up listening with horror as their mothers and grandmothers relayed stories from the times of the Taliban. The daughters' lives were a testament to change, and progress. "My family was a role model in our village," says 22-year-old economics student Mozhgan, also a pseudonym. "People look and say, 'Their daughter studied, and she can now help her family,'" she said from her home in Samangan in central Afghanistan.

But that life is quickly unraveling. Since the Taliban seized control of her province in August, Mozhgan has attended a wedding with no music and stopped her arithmetic lessons for adult women. She now doesn't know if she will be able to graduate, let alone work.

When Zainab's massive cargo plane landed, the doors opened and a gush of hot air rushed over the evacuees. Some thought they were in Egypt, but soon learned it was Qatar. They erupted in jubilation. "People started laughing and crying. Some were singing. They couldn't believe it," Zainab said days later from the sprawling U.S. military base where she is staying. "I didn't, though. I had no one to cry or laugh with."

Zainab now waits, alone, eating U.S. military-issued cookies and sleeping in the clothes in which she fled. She hopes to claim asylum in a Western European country. "I now have freedom. Freedom is the only thing that matters," she says between muffled sobs, as she moves between elation to fear for her brothers, but especially her sisters, whom she left behind in Kabul.

"They say more refugees are coming here," she said. "I hope they manage, because the Taliban will never change." □

WHITE HOUSE MEMO

NO GOOD CHOICES

Biden faces the fallout from his disorderly retreat

BY BRIAN BENNETT

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME JOE BIDEN HAD WITNESSED DEAD Americans returning home from a foreign battlefield as President and Commander in Chief. The bodies of 11 Marines, a Navy medic and an Army staff sergeant arrived on U.S. soil on Sunday, Aug. 29, all killed in a suicide bombing at the Kabul airport on Aug. 26 amid America's chaotic exit from Afghanistan after 20 years of war. For 35 minutes, as the flag-draped cases were carried down the ramp of an Air Force C-17 cargo plane at Dover Air Force Base, in silence except for the hum of aircraft engines and muted troop commands, Biden stood in front of the cold reality of his decisions.

A series of fateful choices over the past six months drew a tragic line to that moment. It was Biden who, in April, settled on an Aug. 31 date for withdrawing U.S. forces from Afghanistan. It was Biden who chose a minimum number of U.S. troops to secure the exit. And it was Biden, updated in intelligence briefings and meetings over the summer, who oversaw his Administration's abandonment of a key air base, the delay in evacuating U.S. citizens and allies, and a belated scramble to provide more troops to get everyone out safely.

Hard decisions are history's acid test for Presidents. It's easy to forget amid the posturing and politics, but the architecture of American power means there are some calls that only the President can make. And when it came to Afghanistan, Biden was determined to make them. He had watched the war's launch as the Senate's top foreign policy overseer nearly 20 years ago, then fought and lost an effort to end it as Vice President. Since announcing the exit, he has never publicly wavered on that call. For his political allies and his opponents alike, it was his experience and certainty that made the Taliban's lightning takeover of Afghanistan and the ensuing, brutal scenes of panicked flight by American and Afghan civilians so shocking. How could Biden fail to forestall the humanitarian disaster headed his way?

More tough decisions are on the way now that the last U.S. plane has lifted off from the Kabul airstrip. The Aug. 26 bombing at Kabul airport's Abbey Gate raises the specter of a continuing terrorist threat in Afghanistan. Biden now presides over the manhunt for the Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K) operatives behind the attack, and on Aug. 29, a U.S. drone strike targeting ISIS-K operatives reportedly killed 10 members of an Afghan



family, including seven children. Between 100 and 200 Americans and thousands of U.S. allies in Afghanistan are now reliant on the Taliban for a way out, while economic collapse threatens a worsening humanitarian crisis. Many of those who have escaped face a global purgatory at temporary sites as Biden's Administration struggles to vet and resettle tens of thousands of refugees.

On Aug. 31, a day after the last U.S. soldier left Kabul, Biden said at the White House that he took "responsibility for the decision" to end the war. As Congress prepares to investigate the withdrawal, he will be held accountable for the calamitous way it unfolded as well.

IN THE WEEKS after he took office, Biden faced a deadline to deliver on his campaign promise to bring the majority of U.S. troops home from Afghanistan. Donald Trump had struck a deal with the Taliban in February 2020 that promised a May 1, 2021, departure for U.S. combat troops and the release of thousands of Taliban prisoners in exchange for an end to attacks on U.S. forces. Taliban negotiators were holding firm to the terms of Trump's deal, and during four National Security Council meetings early this year, Biden sat at the end of the long wood table in the Situation Room in the basement of the West Wing and asked for his options.

There was dissent among his top advisers. At one Principals Committee meeting that included Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley, Biden's top national-security officials debated whether to rip up



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*Biden takes questions from the press on
Aug. 26 after 13 U.S. service members
were killed in a Kabul airport bombing*

to Sun Tzu's *Art of War*: "Always abandon your most strategic air base right before an evacuation." But it was how the Pentagon left Bagram that may have had the most damaging knock-on effect. Afghan troops woke up at the base on July 2 to find the Americans gone, having left in the middle of the night without notifying anyone. Later that day, Biden tried to make things appear under control, telling reporters the U.S. departure was "on track, exactly where we expected to be." But the military's abrupt and secretive departure from Bagram emboldened the Taliban and demoralized the Afghan troops fighting them, Administration officials now admit. Within weeks, Afghan forces collapsed in major provincial capitals as the Taliban took back the country with little resistance.

As the situation worsened, Biden belatedly changed course. On Wednesday, Aug. 11, a previously scheduled evening National Security Council meeting in the Situation Room on a different topic was derailed by what to do next in Afghanistan. Biden tasked the Pentagon to deploy more troops to the region and shore up the Kabul airport, from which he ordered the military to begin evacuating civilians. Biden's team warned the Taliban not to enter Kabul, but when Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled on Aug. 15, one day after assuring Secretary of State Antony Blinken that he would hold the line, the Afghan security forces melted away and the Taliban took the city. By Aug. 26, when a suicide bomber affiliated with ISIS-K donned a vest packed with explosives and made his way to the Kabul airport, it was U.S. Marines and other U.S. service members who were manning the airport's frontline checkpoints, checking papers and conducting pat-downs for thousands trying to flee the Taliban takeover.

IN THE WAKE of the attack and U.S. departure, Biden is still scrambling to evacuate the remaining Americans and Afghans who helped the U.S. during the past two decades. American military and intelligence officials outside Afghanistan are ramping up the effort to track terror groups inside the country, relying more on unmanned drone flights and information sharing with local allies to head off deadly plots that might target the U.S. Tens of thousands of refugees are stuck in camps from Doha, Qatar, to Fort Lee, Va., awaiting screening and resettlement.

Even as the consequences of his decisions continue to unfold, history is already preparing to pass judgment. Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill are readying investigations into Biden's chaotic evacuation and gauging what political impact the deadly withdrawal will have on passing his transformative economic legislation. In capitals around the world, allies and adversaries are weighing what the shambolic U.S. departure from Afghanistan means for its power and influence. And Biden's own allies inside the White House and the Democratic Party are trying to assess the effects of the bloody August unraveling on his, and their, political future. —*With reporting by* W.J. HENNIGAN □

Trump's deal, to ask the Taliban to extend the May 1 deadline or to keep troops on the ground indefinitely. Milley, who served three tours in Afghanistan, said he thought it was important to keep the existing presence there to prevent the country from falling apart, according to two senior Administration officials.

In the end, Biden winnowed the choices before him to either leaving on a fixed timeline or having a permanent troop presence in Afghanistan, which would mean returning to an active shooting war with the Taliban. After a final NSC meeting in mid-April, he officially made the decision to get the troops out. "It's time to end the forever war," Biden told the country on April 14, standing in the same room in the White House where George W. Bush had announced the first attacks on the Taliban in October 2001.

Biden's decision to leave quickly, with a minimal number of troops to preside over the exit, meant abandoning Bagram Air Base, a massive, well-defended facility 40 miles outside Kabul. With orders from the President to take Trump's troop level of 2,500 down to zero by Aug. 31 and defend the U.S. embassy in the process, the Pentagon decided not to ask for the 2,000 additional troops it would have needed to keep Bagram running. "We had to collapse one or the other," Milley told reporters Aug. 18, "and a decision was made."

A dark meme shared among U.S. intelligence officers as chaos spread in late August attributed a fake, snarky quote

REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS ARE READYING INVESTIGATIONS INTO BIDEN'S CHAOTIC EVACUATION

World

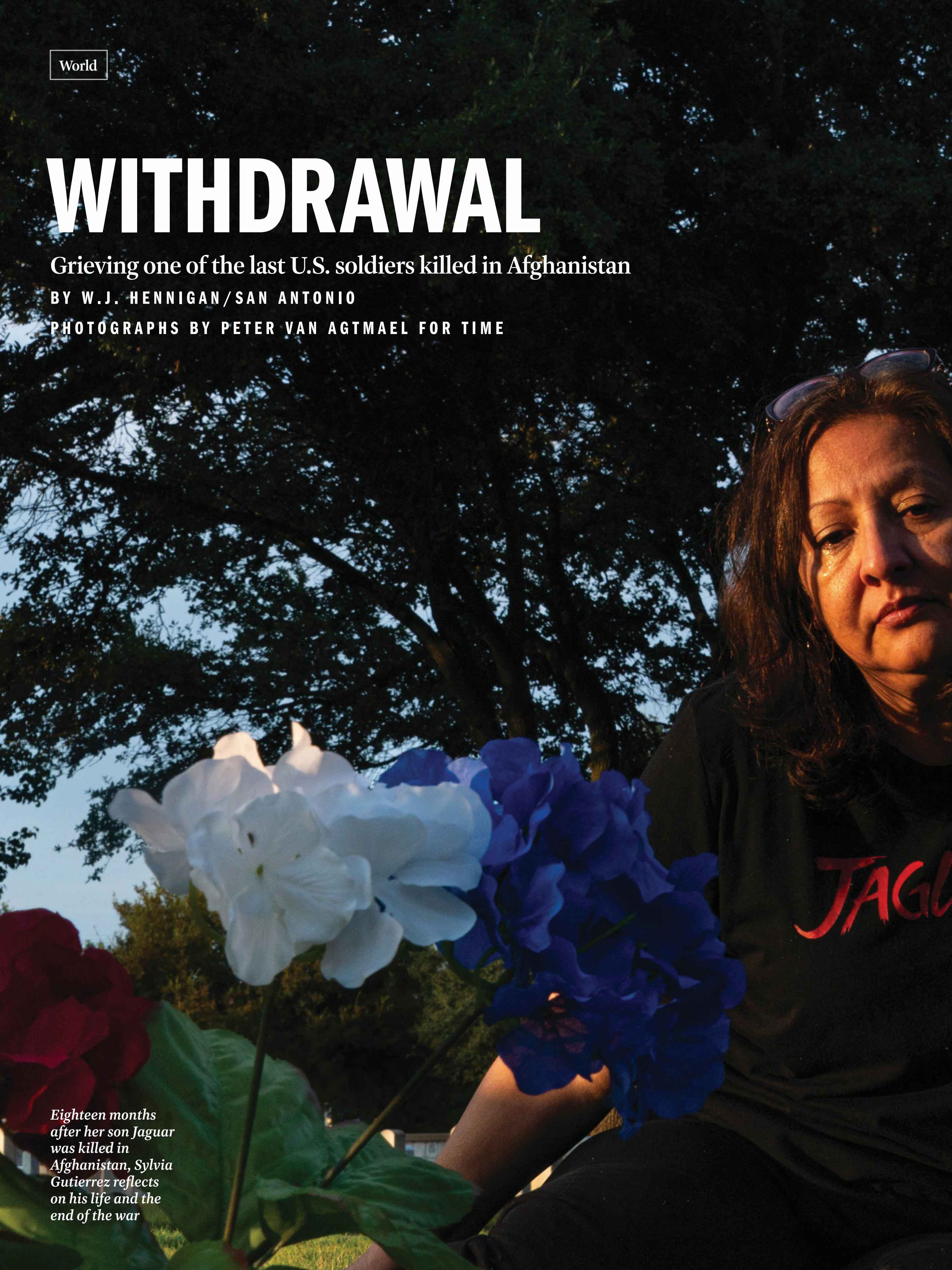
WITHDRAWAL

Grieving one of the last U.S. soldiers killed in Afghanistan

BY W.J. HENNIGAN/SAN ANTONIO

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER VAN AGTMAEL FOR TIME

Eighteen months after her son Jaguar was killed in Afghanistan, Sylvia Gutierrez reflects on his life and the end of the war





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Sergeant First Class Javier Jaguar Gutierrez is buried in Grave 104B of Section 14A at the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio. The white marble headstone is shaded by a willowy oak and adorned with a miniature American flag and a fistful of red, white and blue flowers.

On Aug. 27, Sylvia and Javier Gutierrez make the 29-mile trip to their son's grave site, just as they have done dozens of times since his death 18 months earlier. Time and again, they've come here carrying photographs and fresh bouquets and family gossip. They've also carried a burden inside, one no parent should have to bear: their son was one of the last two American soldiers to die fighting in Afghanistan.

Jaguar, 28, and an Army Ranger were shot and killed on Feb. 8, 2020. An Afghan service member turned his gun on them just three weeks before the U.S. signed a landmark peace deal with the Taliban. Despite the tragedy, the Gutierrez family managed to take a measure of solace in the fact that Jaguar would be one of the last soldiers to die in the nation's longest war. The pain, they thought, would stop with them.

But now they were passing on their burden. The day before their visit to the cemetery, a suicide bomber had killed more than 170 Afghans and 13 U.S. service members at the Kabul airport. The grief Sylvia and Javier had endured over the past year and a half would now be felt by yet another group of shattered U.S. families, a new set of bereaved parents.

Becoming a Gold Star family is an honor that nobody seeks. No one can fathom the heartache endured by the mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, daughters and sons of the fallen. "There's an emptiness," Sylvia says. "I feel like I'll never be whole again. This war—although it's coming to an end—will not end for me."

The Taliban's sudden takeover of Afghanistan is a bitter reality for all Americans after a generation of war. But the jarring





The sunroom in the Gutierrez family's two-story brick home in San Antonio is decorated with remembrances of their fallen son

spectacle hit especially hard for veterans, active-duty service and the families of the 2,461 service members who have died in Afghanistan since 2001. Many questioned whether their sacrifices mattered. The Department of Veterans Affairs and military vet groups reported an uptick in calls to suicide hotlines as the catastrophic collapse of the Afghan government and rushed U.S. exit from the country unfolded on national television. “My son and those that have spilled blood there, or come back with missing limbs, they gave everything,” says Javier, a former Marine. “We’re better than this.”

Sylvia and Javier listen to satellite radio during the ride to the cemetery. Images of the ignominious withdrawal flip through their minds like a slide deck. The frantic airlift in Kabul. The desperate pleas of Afghans turned away at the airport gates. The bloody wreckage of a terror attack. The youthful faces of 11 men and two women who gave their lives to save complete strangers.

They find Jaguar’s grave along the cemetery’s main road, amid a sea of other headstones inscribed with the names of people who fought in conflicts many decades ago. Sylvia and Javier sit on the manicured grass and speak softly to their firstborn son. Through tears, they describe the latest news the best they can. They reveal their shared feelings of helplessness. They tell him they love him and miss him. They make sure to remind him they’re proud of his sacrifice. And then they head home.

THE MIDDLE NAME JAGUAR came from his father. A Desert Storm veteran with shoulder-length black hair and a passion for heavy metal, Javier had visions of his baby boy one day standing before sold-out arenas with a Stratocaster guitar. Jaguar didn’t share his father’s affinity for music. But he did love the name. “He was Jaguar from the start,” Sylvia says.

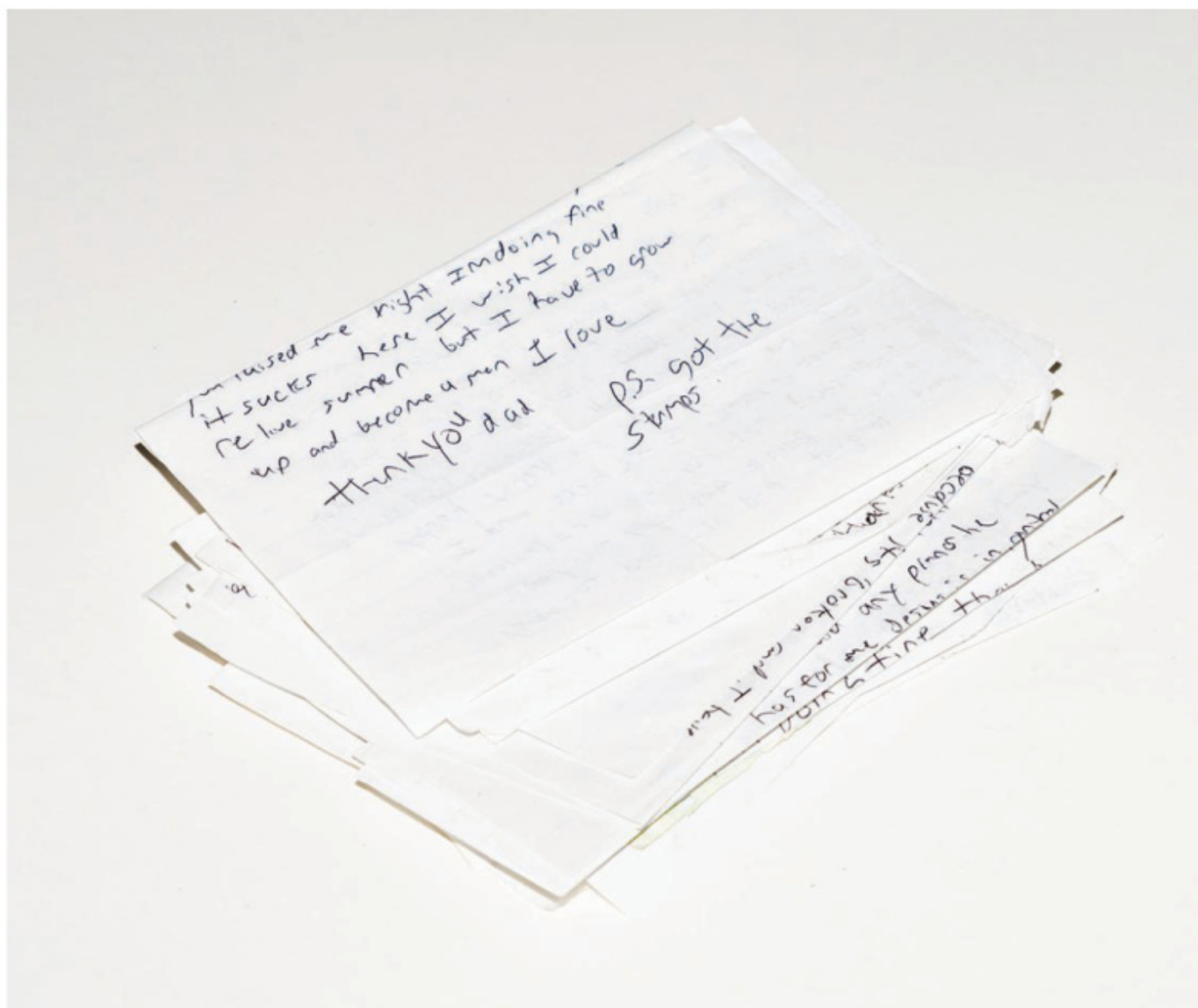
BECOMING A GOLD STAR FAMILY IS AN HONOR NOBODY SEEKS

It was clear early on that Jaguar would follow his dad into military service. As a child, he’d watch old war movies, read military history books and play video games like *Call of Duty*. “He’d arrange toy soldiers around the rim of the bathtub and put on goggles,” Sylvia recalls. “I’d see him in there splashing like he was caught in a battle.”

This is how his family remembers Jaguar: childlike, eccentric, adventurous. His sisters, Janea, 35, and Jordan, 28, remember their brother as a goofball—a guy who would lick the remote control to keep them from changing the channel; a guy who once borrowed Janea’s three-day-old Mazda Tribute to go pick up a Gatorade, only to return 30 minutes later, drenched in sweat, having locked the keys in the car, which had also acquired a bunch of scratches. He had a contagious giggle, which could be triggered by almost anything. He played football, but he wasn’t crazy about it. He didn’t care much for school either, maintaining a C average, which his father believes was likely because of untreated dyslexia and attention deficit disorder.

Jaguar’s intelligence emerged, however, when he applied himself in the armed forces. He enlisted in 2009 at age 17, during his senior year of high school. Much to his father’s chagrin, he chose the Army like his great-grandfather Thomas Ortiz,





Mementos belonging to the family of Army Sergeant First Class Javier Jaguar Gutierrez, who was killed Feb. 8, 2020, in an insider attack by an Afghan soldier, a few weeks before the peace deal was signed between the U.S. and the Taliban

who served during World War II, over Javier's beloved Marine Corps. Jaguar found immediate success as an infantryman. After completing basic training at Fort Benning, Ga., he qualified for airborne school and got assigned to the storied 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, N.C. There he met Gabby, a daughter of Honduran immigrants, who worked as a waitress at an IHOP restaurant near base that he frequented. The two began dating and married a month later.

After a nine-month deployment to Iraq in 2010, he attended Special Forces assessment and selection in 2013 at Fort Bragg. He graduated two years later from the Q course, an excruciating training program that soldiers must pass to earn a green beret. When he passed, Jaguar didn't want his mother to go to the ceremony or post photos to her Facebook feed. His reservedness about his accomplishments made Sylvia feel guilty about talking so openly about him, even after his death. But she knows what she'll reply when she sees him in the afterlife. "I'm going to tell him that he should've done something else with his career," she says, "something that people were less interested in knowing about."

Jaguar was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., as a Special Forces communications sergeant. He and Gabby settled into a three-bedroom, ranch-style home near base in the Florida panhandle. They had four children: Gabriel, Eden, Helen and Emee, who now range in age from 4 to 8. He was a doting and loving father who read the *Lord of the Rings* books aloud to his children each night before they went to sleep. He loved the fantasy trilogy so much, he would watch the movies before every deployment.

Seventh Group is a highly trained unit that primarily conducts missions in Latin America. Its members speak fluent Spanish and work with local forces in remote jungles to combat foreign threats. Yet each of the past three administrations has also deployed the elite group around the world, using it as an alternative to sending thousands of conventional military forces and risking the political blowback that comes with it.

In January, Jaguar's 12-man team of Green Berets, named Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) 7313, embarked on a new set of orders: deploy to Afghanistan's Nangarhar province under a so-called train, advise and assist mission, accompanying Afghan forces who were supposedly in the lead. But that was just semantics. The "assist" part was difficult to distinguish from a traditional American combat mission. It certainly had the same risks, and the same consequences.

THE CALL THAT FOREVER CHANGED the Gutierrez family's lives came on a Saturday evening a little after 5:45 p.m. Sylvia and Javier were getting dressed to make a 6 p.m. Valentine's Day party at their Baptist church. As usual, Javier was lagging, hastily buttoning his black shirt and tucking it into black slacks, when Sylvia's phone lit up with a call from Gabby. When she

picked up, she couldn't understand her daughter-in-law. The words seemed jumbled. She punched the speaker button: "*Me mataron mi esposo. Me mataron mi esposo. Me mataron mi esposo*," she repeated. "They killed my husband."

From across the room, Javier heard what Gabby was saying, but it didn't make any sense. What was she talking about? "My first thought was, 'No, no, no, that couldn't be true,'" Sylvia says. "Then I remembered that I had seen a report on social media earlier in the day of an insider attack. I put it out of my head because it wasn't like Jaguar was the only soldier in Afghanistan."

About two hours later, an Army officer appeared in their doorway. He told Sylvia and Javier that Jaguar's Green Beret team had been ambushed by one of the Afghan troops they were helping. The military's investigation into the attack—more than 100 pages of which was reviewed by *TIME*—is heavily redacted. The unit was assigned to help a meeting between Afghan officers to help clear the way for the peace accord that would be signed three weeks later. ODA 7313 and Afghan forces returned from the meeting to a small military base and requested a U.S. helicopter evacuation at 3:20 p.m. local time. The request was pushed back three times by higher command. The investigation does not explain why.

Around 6 p.m., the mixed group of U.S. and Afghan soldiers were unwinding and shedding their bulletproof vests after sunset prayers. It was then that Sergeant Mohamad Jawid, 23, fired two or three bursts from his machine gun into the resting troops, many with their backs turned. Jaguar was shot nine times. The fatal bullet tore through the back of his helmet and lodged in his brain, killing him instantly, according to the report. Army Ranger Sergeant First Class Antonio Rodriguez, 28, was also killed, and seven other U.S. soldiers, two Afghan soldiers and an Afghan interpreter were wounded. Within 47 seconds, Jawid sprayed 75 to 150 bullets into the group before he was shot and killed by security forces.

Investigators determined Jawid was "likely self-radicalized and influenced by Taliban ideology." Their report does not connect his attack with another that occurred at the same base less than an hour later, in which U.S. soldiers reported being shot at from at least two positions, including a guard tower, when helicopters arrived. Javier found the report suspicious, believing the events must have been linked. He thought the U.S. government did not want to publicly acknowledge the attack was coordinated by the Taliban for fear of losing support for the impending peace deal. But he admits he'll never know for sure.

TWO DAYS AFTER JAGUAR'S DEATH, his remains arrived on a C-17 cargo jet at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence had shown up unannounced to stand with the Gutierrez family in the winter

darkness. As a light mist began to fall, the plane's cargo hold yawned open. Six soldiers with white gloves emerged carrying Jaguar's flag-draped transfer case off the back of the plane.

Overcome with grief, Gabby sprinted down the tarmac toward her husband's casket. She was wailing, repeating his name, as she threw herself onto the C-17's ramp. Two soldiers helped comfort her and carry her away. "The only thing that I was thinking was, I need to see my husband," Gabby says. "I didn't care about anything else or who else was there."

The mortuary team at Dover prepared Jaguar for burial. They cleaned his 211-lb. body and washed his black hair. They put on his dress uniform teeming with medals and ribbons, including a Bronze Star, a Purple Heart and expert infantry and parachutist badges. His Special Forces tab was stitched to his upper left sleeve. A sergeant first class chevron was stitched to the right sleeve.

Javier chose to see his son one last time. He kissed him and touched the wounds that the morticians had labored to close. Then he looked at his boy's face and requested a lock of his hair. "It was the only part of him that looked real to me," Javier says.

It was raining on Feb. 20, 2020, when Jaguar returned home to San Antonio. A police cruiser and motorcycle unit led the silver hearse down the city streets. On each side of the road, hundreds of service members saluted and paid their respects to the local hero. Mourners later gathered at Community Bible Church, where his sister sang in a memorial service led by his uncle, Pastor Robert Gutierrez. "You, through all of your actions, shined a great light for Christ and for this country, and that's something that no terrorist coward will ever extinguish," he said.

Gabby and their four children sat in the front row. "For a long time, I've been on a roller coaster between being angry and sad," she says. "The thing is: I will

never see my husband grow old, and my kiddos do not have him in their everyday lives. We were denied that."



▲
Gabby, Jaguar and the Gutierrez children in Stone Mountain, Ga., in the fall of 2019

WHEN THEIR SON DIED, it felt to Sylvia and Javier as though they'd been dropped into an alien landscape. Javier compared the feeling to a vacation years ago when he and Sylvia had a stopover in Turkey. Airport officials were trying to give them directions, but they didn't know the language. "I didn't have the words to help myself," he says. The family didn't know what they should do, whom they could call or what they needed to plan for. Grief gripped them in strange places: the aisle of a grocery store, midsentence in a book. Finding moments of levity was impossible; they felt like the simple act of laughter was a betrayal.

This June, Sylvia joined a group of Gold Star mothers who meet over Zoom. She spoke with mothers who had lost their children a decade ago, and they swapped tips for dealing with the pain. It made her feel less alone, like she was finally



on the right path in the recovery process. But in recent weeks, the U.S. withdrawal has called up difficult emotions. The family stayed glued to the radio, listening to the news. “The whole thing could’ve been handled better,” Javier says. “I don’t think we should stay in Afghanistan forever, but the way we’re leaving seems rushed. There’s no honor to it.”

After a war that dragged on for years, the collapse of Afghanistan happened quickly. U.S. intelligence assessments initially estimated that Afghan security forces could stave off Taliban offensives against major population centers like Kabul for a year or possibly more. In August, the timetable was sharply downgraded to 30 days or less, according to two current U.S. officials. In the end, Afghan defenses fell apart within 11 days, the troops repeatedly acquiescing to the insurgents.

President Joe Biden has yet to explain why his Administration failed to anticipate an outcome that military and intelligence officials had long predicted. Instead, Biden has remained defiant, blaming the Afghan military, Afghan leadership and the Trump Administration for the humanitarian disaster now playing out. But despite the Administration’s protests, it’s not the choice to pull out of Afghanistan that critics like Javier have seized upon. Polls show most Americans agree with the decision to pull troops out of a chronically mismanaged war. Biden ran on that policy, which was set into motion by his predecessor. It was the way in which the

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On one of the final days of the U.S. evacuation from Afghanistan, Javier Gutierrez studies a photo of his son

Biden Administration withdrew that left the families of the fallen feeling let down. “We feel betrayed,” Gabby says. “I don’t understand how the Taliban is now in power. Our soldiers deserve better.”

The Gutierrez family isn’t alone in their disappointment. Widows, veterans and military members have spoken publicly about how the pullout was being mismanaged. The widespread indignation has prompted senior commanders and leaders at the Pentagon to speak publicly about their sacrifices. “I know that these are difficult days for those who lost loved ones in Afghanistan and for those who carry the wounds of war,” Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters Aug. 18 at the Pentagon. “Let me say to their families and loved ones: Our hearts are with you.” General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, appearing alongside Austin, stated it more succinctly: “Your service mattered.”

Sylvia and Javier are convinced that it did. Jaguar’s death has become a defining element of their identity. They have transformed the sunroom at the front of their two-story brick home in San Antonio into a museum of their dead son. His hunting knives and patches are sealed away in a glass case. Books he read, awards he won, hats he wore are neatly stacked on shelves. Photos, newspaper clippings and paintings are tacked to the walls. “We just try to remember the sacrifice he made,” Javier explains. “You look at what’s happening now in Afghanistan and ask yourself, ‘Was this all worth it?’” He has to believe that it was. □

VIEWPOINT

THE AFGHAN LESSONS

What the U.S. can learn from our 20-year war

BY JAMES STAVRIDIS

THE END WAS GOING TO BE PAINFUL. DURING THE COURSE of several administrations, the American public had grown tired of the war in Afghanistan and simply wanted it to end. The Biden Administration decided to rip the bandage off, but unfortunately it ripped off a tourniquet, and we are watching the hemorrhaging of American honor and the death of the hopes and dreams of many Afghans—particularly many girls and women.

How did we get to this point? Let me share my journey.

The war in Afghanistan began on Sept. 11, 2001. I was a freshly selected one-star admiral, the gold braid brand-new on the sleeves of my service dress blue uniform. My office was on the outer “E-ring” of the Pentagon, and through the windows across the corridor, I glimpsed a Boeing 757 just before it struck the building. The nose of American Airlines Flight 77 hit the first floor. I was about 150 ft. away on the fourth floor, and was spared.

As flames and smoke engulfed the section of the Pentagon with my office, I stumbled down several flights of stairs out onto the grassy field below, and tried to do what I could for the survivors and wounded until the first responders arrived. All I could think of was the irony of the day for me: after decades in the military, I had seen my share of combat—yet I was almost killed in what we all believed was one of the safest buildings in the world.

Within weeks, I was placed in charge of the Navy’s “Deep Blue” innovation cell, a small elite team charged with coming up with strategic ideas and tactical operations to leverage the capabilities of the Navy in what would become known as the “Global War on Terror.” After a year in that role, I was sent back to sea as a carrier strike group commander embarked in the nuclear carrier U.S.S. *Enterprise*—conducting operations on the Horn of Africa and in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Later, I’d serve as senior military assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, and eventually become Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, with strategic responsibility for the war in Afghanistan.

I was thus deeply engaged in what came to be known as the “Forever Wars,” from their start in 2001 in Afghanistan

throughout the tragic misadventure in Iraq, until my retirement from the Navy as NATO commander in 2013. All the U.S. armed forces were profoundly changed by the experiences in both Afghanistan and the war in Iraq that followed. I have watched with great sadness the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. troops, diplomats and civilians from Afghanistan and the fall of Kabul.

WHAT DID IT ALL MEAN, and what lessons should the U.S. military draw from this long conflict?

More than 3,000 U.S. and allied dead, tens of thousands with significant wounds and a few trillion dollars expended—to say nothing of hundreds of thousands of Afghans killed and wounded as well.

In some ways, every war is a tragic waste of time, treasure and, most important, blood. But I believe the troops who fought in Afghanistan can hold their heads up with pride in one crucial way: we were sent to Afghanistan to find and bring to justice the 9/11 attackers and—more important—to prevent another attack on the U.S. homeland emanating from that ungoverned space. For 20 years, we did that. Those troops stood on a wall on the other side of the world defending our nation.

And the gains in Afghanistan—part of our counterinsurgency strategy—are not insignificant. Millions of people can now read and write, many of them girls and women. Life expectancy has increased dramatically, and child mortality is significantly down. Access to information, tech startups, better infrastructure and medical treatment are real, although much is at risk as the Taliban consolidate power.

I signed 2,026 letters of condolence to the families of those



PETER VAN AGTMAEL—MAGNUM PHOTOS



An IED explodes as Marines patrol in Helmand, Afghanistan, in 2009; no one was killed

languages of any country in which we seek to intervene—be that militarily or economically. In Afghanistan, we failed to fully do so, and our hubris and arrogance did not serve us well. Fighting an insurgency is a long game indeed, and we did not heed the historical need for patience—the opposite of unwarranted self-confidence. And the endemic corruption on the part of the Afghan government at every level was destabilizing.

Second, constantly turning over forces hurts badly. The Army and Marines generally had tours of around a year in country, the Navy normally six months, and the Air Force often less than that. Special forces would cycle in and out of country every few months. All that is understandable from a human perspective, but it hurt us badly in terms of continuity and expertise.

Third, we did not efficiently adapt our technology to this new fight swiftly enough. It took us far too long to find solutions to the improvised explosive device challenge, improve satellite intelligence delivery to remote battlefields, procure simpler aviation systems that could be adapted to the rigors of Afghanistan and create better communication systems among different national forces. In retrospect, we should have trained an Afghan fighting force that would have looked more like the Taliban—light, swift, less reliant on heavy logistics, high-tech intelligence and airpower.

LASTLY, WE DID NOT CREATE the conditions on the home front that could have sustained a truly long-term effort. As casualties dropped while we withdrew the vast majority of troops under President Obama, the war in Afghanistan simply fell off the media and national radar. Across multiple administrations, we failed to communicate why our presence in Afghanistan was still useful and what benefit the U.S. and our allies derived from the expenditure of lives and treasure. The opportunity to bring all the troops home, touted as a campaign talking point by Trump (although about 90% of the 100,000 had long since returned), was a hollow but alluring call. Keeping a small footprint (down to 2,500 by the time Biden took office) would have made sense, but by then political patience had expired.

It is hard to construct a positive scenario. With luck, the future under Taliban 2.0 will be somewhat less apocalyptic than under the earlier edition, but we can't count on that.

For years the U.S. was somewhere between excessively optimistic and near delusional about what was possible to achieve. Sadly, Operation Enduring Freedom was neither enduring nor did it deliver freedom for the Afghan people. It did buy two relatively terror-free decades in the U.S. But clearly we need to relearn the lessons of history and apply them in any future intervention, or we may again find failure awaiting us when we come to the end of our next major overseas engagement.

Stavridis, a TIME contributing editor, was the 16th Supreme Allied Commander at NATO and is vice chair of global affairs at the Carlyle Group

killed under my NATO mission. Almost a third of the letters, by the way, were sent to European and other coalition families. To those families I would say their loved ones fell in the service of a meaningful mission for their 50 different nations. But I would also now say we could have done better, lost fewer of them, spent far less treasure and used some of the lessons from Vietnam (and previous wars in Afghanistan). We could have done a better job of communicating our goals and aspirations to the people of our country and the people of the country in which we were fighting. We also could have done much better in marshaling and accounting for our resources and guarding against corruption and waste. We could have checked our hubris and optimism at the door.

It was all quite reminiscent of the campaigns by their ancestors against the Soviets in the 20th century, the British in the 19th century and all the way back to Alexander the Great in ancient times. As in Vietnam, the U.S. forces were never defeated on the battlefield—but as a North Vietnamese officer pointed out to an American officer after the war there, “that is true; but it is also irrelevant.” All this is so predictable in hindsight, of course. So the central question becomes simple: Why did we not learn from this history?

The debates over “who lost Afghanistan” are just beginning. As was the case in Vietnam, there are plenty of suspects that will be debated endlessly. History will sort that out.

But what interests me are the lessons we could and should take away.

First, we must learn and understand the history, culture and

**FOR YEARS THE U.S. WAS
SOMEWHERE BETWEEN
EXCESSIVELY OPTIMISTIC
AND NEAR DELUSIONAL
ABOUT WHAT WAS POSSIBLE**

Politics

The Schumer Method

HOW THE SENATE'S GREAT KIBITZER BECAME
THE KEY TO THE BIDEN AGENDA **BY MOLLY BALL**

CHUCK SCHUMER'S FLIP PHONE HAS A TWO-TONE RING: BUZZ-BUZZ, buzz-buzz; two low tones, two high ones. The Senate majority leader almost always knows who's calling, even though he doesn't program the numbers in. "Elizabeth, I'll call you back," he says, flipping the phone open in the middle of a recent interview in his office off the floor of the chamber. "Where are you? You're here? O.K., I'll call you back."

He sees he's missed a call from a restricted number. "I know who's restricted—it's probably Warner," he says. He punches in the 10 digits for Virginia Senator Mark Warner, which he's memorized along with all the others. "Did you just call me?" Sure enough, that's who it was. It's an old Schumer party trick. Montana Senator Jon Tester, he says, just got a new number, "and now I have it stuck in my head."

For Schumer, the Senate's Great Kibitzer, leadership consists of talking—and talking, and talking, and talking. The other 49 members of the Democratic caucus marvel at how frequently he calls. He calls just to check in; he calls in the middle of the night; he calls when other people might send a text or email, formats he abhors. ("You never learn things by email. I hate it.") Schumer estimates that he talks to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi two or three times a day, President Biden two or three times a week, White House chief of staff Ron Klain three or four times a day. "I talk to people—*talk*," he says, feet propped on an ottoman to salve his bad knees. "Everyone should talk. If you disagree with

*The Senate
majority leader in
his office at the U.S.
Capitol on Aug. 4*



Politics

someone, fine, be respectful—but talk!”

After four decades in Washington, Schumer is such a fixture it's easy to forget he's new at his current job: he only became majority leader in January. But faced with a massive task and with no votes to spare, he's hit his marks thus far, steering President Biden's agenda through the Senate with remarkable success. Biden's American Rescue Plan passed on a party-line vote at its full proposed price tag, \$1.9 trillion, in March. All but one of his original Cabinet nominees were confirmed. Bills to fund technological research and crack down on hate crimes against Asian Americans have sailed through by wide, bipartisan margins. And in the wee hours of the morning on Aug. 11, the Senate passed a trillion-dollar bipartisan infrastructure bill, a priority that had eluded multiple previous Presidents.

None of this was inevitable. The Senate in recent years has been known more as a legislative bottleneck than a fount of achievement. The body politic has rarely been more contentious; everything from face masks to counting electoral votes devolves into partisan conflict. Nor was it clear at the outset that Schumer was up to the job: more at home at a press conference than a late-night bill markup, he built his reputation as a political guru, not a legislative strategist. Early on, some Senators privately wondered if the people pleaser would be able to instill discipline in his ideologically diverse ranks. Pessimists expected a return to the miserable grind of grandstanding speeches and blocked votes.

Yet the very qualities that inspired such skepticism—the frenetic schmooziness, the relentless politicking—may have made Schumer the man for this moment. Legislating, after all, is a collaborative effort: the representatives of America's far-flung component parts trying to find enough in common to make the laws for all of us. Schumer's garrulous style—a marked contrast to his Republican counterpart, the taciturn Mitch McConnell, as well as his Democratic predecessor, the laconic Harry Reid—makes every lawmaker feel essential, and thus willing to be part of the solution. “He sort of understands everyone's idiosyncrasies, from Bernie [Sanders] to [Joe] Manchin,” says Senator Cory Booker, a New Jersey Democrat. “He's touchy-feely, he wants to know how you're doing, he wants to understand your

priorities, and that creates trust. Even if you don't get your way, you feel heard.”

Schumer's next act will be his biggest test yet: a massive \$3.5 trillion grab bag of social spending that Biden hopes will serve as the capstone of his ambitious domestic agenda. With no Republicans expected to support it, Schumer will have to get every member of his caucus on board. If he succeeds, Democrats believe they will have remade the social contract in ways not seen since FDR. “The list of things we want to do, any one of them would be a major legislative achievement in a normal year,” says Warner, listing childcare subsidies, free community college, Medicare-benefit expansion and climate proposals. “I can't think of a better time to have a debate about the role of government than now, when we're coming out of COVID.”

To Schumer, the goal is bigger than making the Senate a pleasant place to work, making sure his party's President succeeds or even making critical policies. It's about restoring Americans' faith in government in order to prevent the rise of another Donald Trump-style demagogue. “Congress's reputation for ineptitude is not something Chuck Schumer can overcome in two years,” says Caren Street, a former top Reid aide. “But what he has accomplished thus far has built people's confidence about the ability to get something done across party lines, which is what this country needs right now.”

THE DAY SCHUMER BECAME majority leader was his worst day in the Senate. It was Jan. 6, 2021. That morning, Democrats learned they'd won a 50th Senate seat—and that afternoon, the Capitol was sacked by a mob dispatched by the still-sitting President, who couldn't accept he'd lost. Whisked away to an undisclosed location until the threat passed, Schumer later learned the rioters had come within yards of his path.

It wasn't much of a leap to believe the insurrection had set the tone for two years of congressional warfare. Lawmakers' first task would be a second impeachment, further inflaming tensions. Democrats braced for a replay of the Obama years, when the Republicans, led by McConnell, systematically obstructed the President's agenda, slow-rolling negotiations, weaponizing the 60-vote filibuster threshold and refusing to give Obama's

last Supreme Court nominee a hearing. The chamber had struggled even to pass routine government-funding legislation. When Biden, a 36-year Senate veteran, campaigned for President on a promise of bringing back bipartisan compromise, his Democratic primary competitors mocked his naiveté.

The current Senate's first order of business, Biden's American Rescue Plan, was styled as an economic-stimulus and COVID-19 relief bill. But the funding for vaccines and \$1,400 checks it contained was just the beginning of a laundry list of liberal spending, from paid leave to food-stamp and health care subsidies. Many observers assumed the \$1.9 trillion price tag was a negotiating gambit that would inevitably get whittled down. A group of Republicans made a counterproposal, hoping to start talks. But Schumer pressed the White House to pass the full proposal without delay on a party-line vote, and he bent over backward to get every Democratic Senator to go along.

At the last minute, it nearly fell apart when Manchin, the most conservative Democrat, objected to an unemployment-insurance provision. Schumer spent nine hours in frantic shuttle diplomacy with Manchin, the White House and other members of the caucus. When the bill finally passed, it was a testament to his determination to accommodate his members. It was also a crucial show of strength, proving to Republicans that Democrats were willing and able to move on party lines when necessary. “I think it's important to do everything we can to reach out to Republicans and do what we can get done on a bipartisan basis,” says Senator Debbie Stabenow of Michigan. “But I also know we need to get things done, and if Republicans aren't willing to support us, we've shown we're willing to proceed as Democrats.” Schumer, she says, is “somebody who just doesn't quit. He'll talk to anybody, anytime, and just keep talking until they either give up or we get consensus.”

The early victory created momentum for other bipartisan efforts. Schumer ushered through a research-funding package intended to counter Chinese influence as well as an anti-Asian hate-crime bill, both by large margins. But the infrastructure package would be the main event of the legislative year, central to Biden's



promise of practical, pocketbook results.

The President wanted it to be bipartisan, but Republicans balked. Biden's priorities included not just the traditional "hard" infrastructure of roads and bridges, pipes and power grids, but also huge social spending—which the Administration called "human infrastructure"—and tax hikes on businesses and high earners. Weeks of negotiations between the White House and a group of GOP Senators led by Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia went nowhere. By June, they had run aground.

But a second bipartisan group had formed under the radar, led by Republican Rob Portman and Democrat Kyrsten Sinema, and they told Schumer they were making real progress. Their bill would be limited to "hard" infrastructure and be paid for without tax hikes. In consultation with Pelosi and Biden, Schumer devised a "two-track process" that would pair their bipartisan proposal with a second, larger, Democrats-only package containing other priorities. The complicated process isn't

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Schumer with Raphael Warnock of Georgia, whose runoff win in January lifted the party to the Senate majority

necessarily what Schumer or many liberals preferred, but enough Senators wanted it that he had little choice. "There are a good number of my members who want to try to do things that are bipartisan, and I respect that," he says. "But there are a lot of things you can't do bipartisan—you can't do climate, you can't do the family stuff, you can't do the kind of big, bold agenda we need—so we have two tracks, and each side knows they need the other. The moderates know they need the progressives to get their bill through, and the progressives know they need the moderates to get their proposal through."

Portman, the lead GOP negotiator, says Schumer's main contribution to the bipartisan group's work was simply getting out of the way. "I give credit to leader McConnell and leader Schumer for not trying to deep-six the negotiations," he

says. "If either of them had done that, it would have likely died." Even then, it was harder than it should have been given both Republican and Democratic Presidents have promised to tackle infrastructure for decades. "We were able to exercise the bipartisan muscle memory that's been lost to a certain extent," Portman says. "For Republicans, I hope it shows the country that we can get big things done in a bipartisan way, and therefore eliminating the filibuster is not necessary."

Still, as the summer progressed, deadline after deadline slipped away. The 11 Democratic negotiators complained to Schumer that Republicans kept moving the goalposts, while the Republicans were convinced Democrats were trying to sneak things that hadn't been agreed to into the massive 2,740-page bill. Worried the process was stalled, Schumer scheduled a procedural vote on the unfinished legislation in late July to force the group to put up or shut up.

The negotiators complained they were being strong-armed, but Schumer had cor-

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rectly assessed that they were in too deep to walk away. The procedural vote failed, but it spurred the bipartisan group to announce a self-imposed deadline, and soon the bill was done. “That pressure got people’s shoulder to the wheel,” says Tester, a member of the group. Without Schumer’s gambit, “we’d still probably be talking about the bipartisan deal. He was able to apply pressure when appropriate, and then have the patience to let the process work.”

The result is a bill that nobody loves but most can tolerate, stuffed with pork for Senators to tout back home and propped up by budgetary gimmicks. Despite an intense late campaign against the bill by Trump, 19 GOP Senators, including McConnell, supported it. “It’s a win for everybody—the Republicans, the Democrats, the White House,” says GOP lobbyist Liam Donovan. “Trump didn’t believe in the idea of a win-win. For him, you win when the other guy loses, so he can’t conceive of a piece of legislation that’s a win for Biden that isn’t inherently bad for Republicans. But that’s how government and legislating are supposed to work.”

TO HEAR SCHUMER tell it, he owes much of his success to the mimeograph—the hand-cranked purple-ink duplicating machine that preceded the photocopier. “If we still had them, we wouldn’t have to legalize marijuana, because the ink gave you a legal high that was incredible,” Schumer, who proposed federal pot-legalization legislation in July, tells me with a laugh.

The Brooklyn-born son of an exterminator and a housewife, Schumer at 14 got a job running a mimeograph machine for a neighbor whose tutoring business helped students prepare for the SAT. Manning the machine for hours at a time, he eventually memorized the practice tests and study guides. “I got 800s on my tests—not because I’m so smart, but because I read the preparatory materials over and over and over,” he says. Schumer got into Harvard, and the neighbor, Stanley Kaplan, went on to found the eponymous test-prep empire.

The duplicating skills came in handy once again in college, where the working-class Jewish kid felt terribly out of place among the blue bloods. He joined the Harvard Young Democrats and began volunteering for Eugene McCarthy’s presidential campaign out of opposi-

tion to the Vietnam War, taking buses to New Hampshire to knock on doors in advance of the primary. Schumer knew how to run the mimeograph machine that cranked out leaflets in the local campaign office, so they made him deputy manager. When McCarthy’s second-place finish prompted President Lyndon Johnson to announce he would not seek re-election, Schumer says, he realized the power of political activism to change the course of history: “A ragtag group of students and nobodies topples the most powerful man in the world? This is what I want to do with my life.” Above all, he didn’t want to repeat his father’s existence, stuck toiling at a business he had no passion for.

Schumer’s aw-shucks humblebrags conceal a canny, ambitious pol. Far from lucking into academic success and falling into politics, he was a high school valedictorian and quiz-bowl champion, wrote his Harvard thesis on congressional dynamics and graduated magna cum laude. At 23, fresh out of Harvard Law School but uninterested in practicing law, he won a seat in the New York State assembly, upsetting an entrenched Democrat in a primary. Colleagues say Schumer’s hoary bromides and constant solicitousness mask a fierce intelligence—one smart enough to know that people prefer feeling like they’re being heard to feeling like they’re being led.

As a lawmaker, Schumer wasn’t particularly ideological; his focus was winning. Elected to the House in 1980 and the Senate in 1998, he embraced Clintonesque centrism, declaring his opposition to crime and wasteful spending. He raised buckets of money from his Wall Street constituents and voted for the Iraq War. To climb the ladder in Washington, he assiduously curried favor with colleagues. In 2006, as chair of the Democrats’ Senate campaign arm, he recruited conservative candidates in red states and counseled them to avoid hot-button topics like immigration and guns. Democrats picked up six seats and the majority. Schumer followed that victory with a book, *Positively American*, that warned his party it was in danger of losing the middle class.

By the time Schumer became Democratic leader when Reid retired in 2017, the party was back in the minority and Trump was President—a bittersweet time, in other words, to achieve one’s

lifelong goal. Schumer’s Democrats were mostly successful at blocking Trump’s agenda. Schumer personally lobbied the late Senator John McCain to cast the crucial vote against repealing Obamacare, and held his party together in opposition to Trump’s sole major legislative achievement, the 2017 tax cut.

But many progressives wondered if a consensus-focused dealmaker was the right person to lead the Resistance in the Senate. Some liberals faulted Schumer for continuing to work with the Administration on issues like infrastructure and COVID relief and for not fighting harder against Trump’s Cabinet and judicial nominations. At one point, Schumer floated a deal to fund Trump’s border wall in exchange for protecting young recipients of deportation waivers.

Reid had kept a small inner circle and ruled with an iron fist, but Schumer quickly established himself as a different type of leader. He expanded the group of Senators included in weekly leadership meetings from four to 12, stacking the





group not just with loyal lieutenants but also with ideological outliers, including Sanders and Manchin. They meet every Monday evening in Schumer's office on the second floor of the Capitol, a meeting frequently interrupted by Schumer's buzzing phone. "There are three rules," Schumer says of the meetings. "One, treat each other with respect—don't say that guy's a sellout or this person has no courage. Second, walk in the other person's shoes"—that is, try to understand the pressures faced back home by the likes of Manchin, whose state voted nearly 70% for Trump. "But third, if we don't have unity, we have nothing. Every single one of us, with 50 votes, could say, 'I'm not going to do this unless I get my way,' and if each person did that we'd all get nothing."

Schumer has a like-minded partner in Biden, an old Senate hand with a similar populist sensibility and fetish for consensus. Also like Biden, Schumer has veered left in recent years, a shift he chalks up to the country's changing needs and his constituents' changing priorities, but which

The majority leader works at the videoconferencing station in his Capitol office

many suspect has more to do with making sure he doesn't face a primary challenge from the likes of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez when he's up for re-election next year.

Whatever the reason, both Schumer and Biden now appear determined to push the legislative envelope. "What Chuck has understood is that we are living in an unprecedented moment in American political history when it is important for us to be bold in addressing the long-neglected needs of working families," says Sanders. "You might think that someone with 50 votes and no margin of error would take a status quo approach. But he has not done that."

IF SCHUMER HAS BEEN more successful than many anticipated, many factors have been working in his favor. Most new Presidents get their top agenda items

passed in the first two years of their term. Trump's exit prompted a sigh of relief on both sides of the aisle, while Democrats' hair's-breadth margins have increased their sense of urgency not to let a minute in the majority go to waste. The 50-50 Senate may be as much a help as a hindrance: most of the time, no one Senator wants to be the one to blow things up for everyone else.

And while the Senate may be less dysfunctional than before, it would be premature to declare that a grand new era of bipartisanship has dawned. Once-promising police-reform talks have stalled, voting-rights legislation has run aground, and most Democrats see little hope for action on immigration or gun control. Even the two-track infrastructure and budget plan could still all fall apart. House members, resentful of being locked out of the Senate talks, are itching to put their own stamp on both bills. The Senate approved the framework for the \$3.5 trillion spending plan, but it hasn't yet been fleshed out in actual legislation. Those negotiations, now under way in various committees, promise to be at least as contentious and exhausting as the round just completed—and that bill, too, will have to get through the House.

But success begets success, and the fact that the agenda has gotten this far has increased Democrats' confidence. "There's going to be negotiations within our party, and that's fine," says Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, a member of Schumer's leadership team. "But we've all committed to getting something done. We wouldn't have been voting until 4 a.m. if we weren't committed."

And so Schumer keeps wearing out his flip phones. "I bought 20 of them. I'm on No. 18," he says gleefully, brandishing a since-discontinued four-year-old LG, its 3-in. rectangular screen blessedly free of apps or widgets. What tends to break, he says, isn't the electronics; it's the hinge in the middle—the connection between the parts. "I try to set a direction, but only communicating. I don't just sit in a room," he says. "You've got to listen to people, then decide the direction forward and explain it to them. And so far, everybody's followed." —*With reporting by MARIAH ESPADA, NIK POPLI and JULIA ZORTHIAN* □



Everything is expensive

AT LEAST IT SEEMS THAT WAY. THE JOURNEY OF ONE STUFFED TOY EXPLAINS THE INFLATION GROWING IN THE U.S.

BY ALANA SEMUELS

► JANI, A 4-FT. PLUSH GIRAFFE, ARRIVED on my doorstep in mid-July, her brown eyes glassy as if she were still finding her bearings after a long journey at sea.

What a journey it has been. It was August of last year that Viahart, the company that sells Jani on Amazon, ordered a container's worth of plush toys, including her. This was around the time U.S. consumers started spending again after an initial dip at the beginning of the pandemic. And as demand for toys and TVs and couches rose, the ships and trains and trucks carrying them got overwhelmed. That made it much more expensive to get Jani to my doorstep.

"Good Day, No rail schedule yet. Rail delays due to chassis shortage & port congestion. Please continue to monitor," reads an email from COSCO Shipping (North America), the company responsible for getting the container from China to Viahart's Texas warehouse, about why the container was sitting for weeks at the Port of Los Angeles. Before

the pandemic, Viahart paid \$4,700 to send a 40-ft. container from China to Texas. Now it's around \$21,000.

There's no question that inflation is surging in the U.S. The cost of goods was up 5.4% in July from the same period a year ago, the largest annual increase since 2008. Many things can cause inflation: increased consumer demand, a rise in wages, a spike in other costs. This time around, economists agree that an overwhelmed logistics network is largely to blame. "If you look at where prices are rising, it's not across the board; it's in really specific sectors," like lumber and cars, says J.W. Mason, an economics professor at John Jay College. These sectors can't produce things as quickly as consumers want them for a variety of reasons, he says: "It's about those specific glitches that come from reopening."

These rising prices are stressful for consumers, whose money doesn't go as far as it used to, and for companies, which are seeing their costs rise and have no choice but to pass the increase on to consumers. When the cost of getting a container full of stuffed toys quadruples, "we have to raise prices in order to make money," says Mike Molson Hart, the president of Viahart. "The question becomes,

'Is anyone going to buy this at the new higher price?' We're flying blind."

If you want to understand what's driving inflation in the U.S. economy right now, look no further than Jani the giraffe. Jani used to cost around \$87. Now she's around \$116, as costs have gone up on every step of her journey.

JANI WAS MADE in China, in a factory about four hours from the port of Qingdao, halfway between Beijing and Shanghai. Although some products have gotten more expensive to make because of the rising cost of raw materials like glass and metal, Viahart didn't have to pay much more to make Jani. Stuffed animals are made from plastic pellets, which are made from oil, but when Jani was made in August, oil prices were at historic lows because demand had collapsed. Before the pandemic, Jani cost about \$22.04 to make; in August, she cost \$23.76, a rise explained by the U.S. dollar having fallen compared with China's RMB.

But getting Jani to the U.S. would prove much more expensive. Because Viahart is a small company, it doesn't negotiate with shipping companies directly. Instead, it called a freight forwarder—a logistics company that

◀ JANI THE GIRAFFE, PHOTOGRAPHED AT VIAHART'S WAREHOUSE IN WILLS POINT, TEXAS

Business

negotiates the best prices for shipping a single container, rather than a whole boatload of goods.

Beginning around April 2020, even the freight forwarders, who do this professionally, started having a hard time finding space on ships. In normal years, demand for space on ships peaks around Lunar New Year, right before factories in China shut down for the holiday, says Jeffrey Wang, a business-development executive at Air Tiger Express, a freight forwarder Viahart frequently uses. Then there's a lull. In 2020, there was no lull. People started ordering things, but Chinese factories were closed due to COVID-19. When they reopened, there weren't enough containers to hold all the goods, nor was there enough ship space.

Knowing that space on ships was in demand, shipping companies started raising prices, sometimes forcing companies into bidding wars to nab limited spots. "Right now, it's kind of the wild, wild West—everyone is desperate for cargo space," Wang says.

The factory finished making Jani on Sept. 27, about 40 days after Viahart placed the order. On Oct. 7, a container of plush toys left the factory by truck and was loaded on a vessel from the COSCO shipping line, the *CSCL Winter*.

If she had stayed on that boat, she would have arrived in the U.S. on Nov. 4. But Jani and her container were offloaded in Shanghai. Viahart got no explanation for why this happened; the company was informed that the container would now arrive on Nov. 11 rather than the previous week. "Where is the container now?" Sarah Joy Tan, Viahart's exceedingly patient production and quality manager, wrote in an email to the freight forwarder. "I didn't expect it to be more than two weeks in Shanghai." The forwarder wrote back, "Container will be rolled to another mother vessel," providing no other explanation. Finally, on Oct. 26, Jani was loaded onto another ship in Shanghai, the *Judith Schulte*, to make the long journey to the Port of Los Angeles.

"There is a war being waged in container terminals around the world," says Sébastien Breteau, the CEO of QIMA, which does quality control along the supply chain. Freight forwarders and shippers fight to get shipping slots.

AMID A WORKER SHORTAGE THIS SPRING, VIAHART RAISED ENTRY-LEVEL WAGES AT ITS TEXAS WAREHOUSE FROM \$10 TO \$14 AN HOUR TO KEEP THE FACILITY OPERATING



From factory to doorstep

Jani's journey from the factory to L.A., which took about 38 days before the pandemic, took 53 last fall. Despite that slower service, Viahart paid about \$13.27 per stuffed animal, up from \$3.01 before the pandemic.

THE JUDITH SCHULTE was not alone as it approached L.A. After slowing dramatically in the first half of 2020, as some factories closed because of COVID-19 and U.S. consumers waited to see what was going to happen, shipping volumes finally began rising in the summer. The number of 20-ft. containers arriving in the Port of Los Angeles reached nearly 511,000 in October, up from 400,000 in October 2019 and double what it was in March.

But that spike in traffic after such a lull caused congestion, and the ports couldn't handle all the ships like the *Judith Schulte* coming in to unload goods. Before the pandemic, it was unusual to see one

vessel waiting at anchor off the ports; by the beginning of 2021, there were around 40 ships anchored and waiting to unload. That backup has persisted into August.

The *Judith Schulte* was supposed to arrive on Nov. 11 but did not get to a container terminal at the Port of Los Angeles until Nov. 16. Then it sat for seven days before leaving, which is an "exceptionally long time," according to Spire, which uses satellites to provide data for the maritime industry. Jani's container was offloaded on Nov. 19. She was not put on a train until Dec. 20.

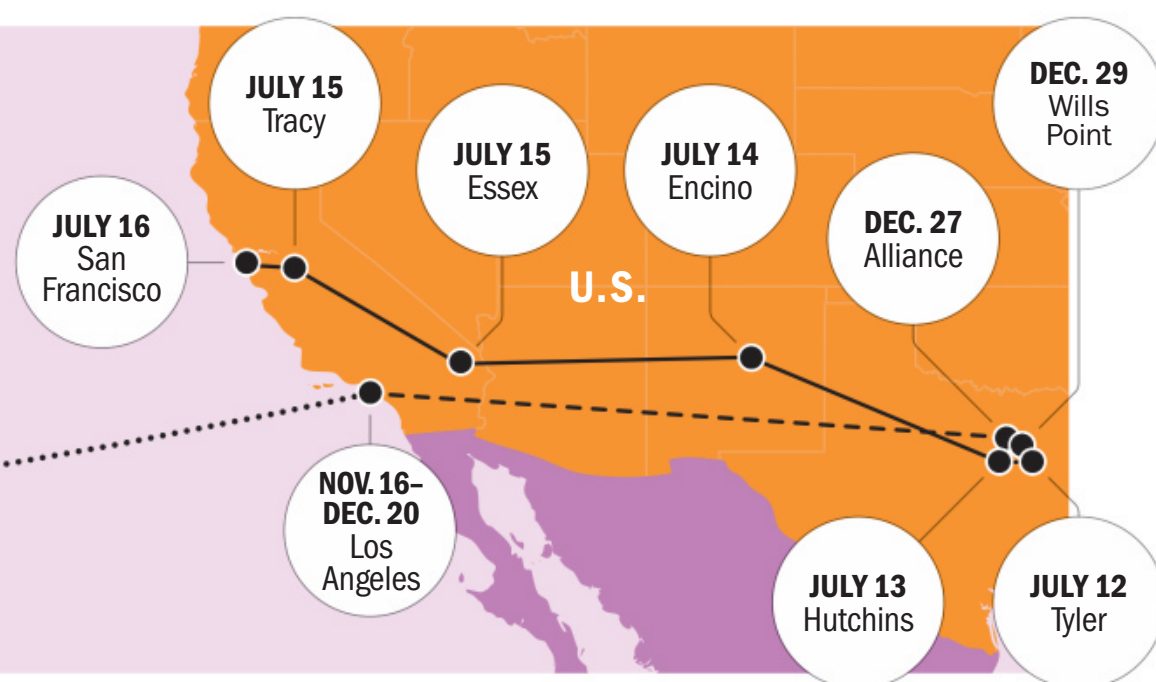
"Can you please check if we already have a schedule to load the container on the rail?" Joy Tan wrote to the freight forwarder on Dec. 3. He wrote back: "As previously advised, container is still at the terminal ... it's Cosco's responsibility to set up containers for rail move ... We really are trying to get some updates, but we are at the mercy of the carrier here."



Jani passed through more than 11 transit points on three forms of transportation from China to San Francisco

KEY Ship
----- Train
———— Truck

PACIFIC OCEAN



The quiet frustration in the emails from Viahart, which was powerless to do anything to move its container, is one reason that Wang, the Air Tiger Express executive, now tells his customers that containers are arriving two weeks later than the carrier has said they will. Before the pandemic, he would pad the date by just a few days.

I tried to get an answer for why Jani's container was delayed in Shanghai, why the boat was so late and took so long to get unloaded, and why the container sat in the Port of Los Angeles for more than a month. But every operator in the supply chain blamed someone else.

Hart attributed the delays to the fact that the U.S. ports don't run 24/7, as ports in Asia do. But Mario Cordero, the executive director of the Port of Long Beach, says ports can't run 24/7 until the truckers who pick up containers and the warehouses that unload them also operate 24/7. Truckers say they can't get the chassis needed to transport containers from ports and trains to warehouses, because the shipping companies are holding them hostage to make money from the truckers they have special deals with, according to a lawsuit filed by the American Trucking Associations. COSCO, the shipping company that moved Jani, in

turn blamed "port congestion," saying containers that were unloaded weeks ago could not be reached.

The "dwell time"—the amount of time a container is sitting onshore before being loaded onto trucks—at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach was 4.76 days in June, up from two days in March 2020, according to the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association. Containers sat even longer before getting on trains—an average of 11.8 days, up from 7.9 days in January, when the association started measuring.

Carlos Ramirez, a terminal operator who dispatches trucks to pick up containers from inland facilities, says his truckers have issues delivering containers to warehouses because they're so short on staff. "We've had containers sit for a week or two in our yard because they don't have the manpower to unload it," he says. His company hires owner operators who have their own

'We are at the mercy of the carrier here.'

—EMAIL FROM VIAHART'S FREIGHT FORWARDER

Business

trucks, but it's gotten more difficult to find any to hire in the past year, he says.

In short, delays are everybody's fault, and nobody's. "Because the volume surge has affected every part of the supply chain, however, there is no single set of actors—ocean carriers, rail carriers, truckers, marine terminals, or cargo owner warehouses and distribution centers—that can clear the bottlenecks single-handedly," John W. Butler, president and CEO of the World Shipping Council, a lobbying group for liner ships, testified at a June congressional hearing about supply-chain delays.

All this meant it took 40 days for Jani to get from Long Beach to Viahart's Wills Point, Texas, warehouse, a distance of about 1,500 miles that a real giraffe could have walked in about half that time. She arrived at the warehouse on Dec. 29, more than a month late.

AS DELAYS MOUNT, every company along the supply chain is raising prices. BNSF has started charging for chassis and containers sitting too long in its facilities. COSCO and other shipping companies have raised rates and started charging congestion fees. Ramirez has raised prices for container storage in his yard, and will soon boost driver pay to improve retention. Wages for truckers and warehouse workers have jumped 8% since 2019, after growing at a rate of 4% for the two years before that.

Trucks are an important part of getting containers from the ports to warehouses. They're also what get packages from those warehouses to the customer's doorstep. With delays at ports and rail yards, truck trips are taking longer because truckers have to sit around waiting.

Some trucking companies allow around two hours of waiting time, and then start charging logistics companies for any extra time that the driver waits. Because there is so much demand, trucking companies are running on a tight schedule; if a truck breaks, or a container gets delayed, or a warehouse is short-staffed, it throws off future deliveries too. "There's no room for mistakes at all," says Ramirez.

There's been a very fragile supply chain in many parts of the trucking industry since it was deregulated in the 1980s, says Steve Viscelli, a sociologist



▲ **THE PANDEMIC-FUELED E-COMMERCE SURGE HAS FEDEX DELIVERING "MORE PACKAGES THAN EVER BEFORE"**

at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of *The Big Rig: Trucking and the Decline of the American Dream*. Now, hundreds of thousands of drivers pay their own expenses and don't make any money when there isn't cargo being moved. That means that in the beginning of the pandemic, when there wasn't any cargo being moved because factories in China had closed, lots of truckers had to look for other ways to make money.

Jobs hauling containers to and from ports, and those taking containers long distance—so-called over-the-road drivers—are some of the worst jobs in trucking, Viscelli says. Since deregulation, many of these truckers are now independent contractors who get paid by the load. That means the delays at ports and terminals have hit them particularly hard. They're deciding it's not worth the money if they're just going to sit around waiting for hours and not get paid for that time. The average annual turnover rate for long-haul truckers at big companies



was more than 90% before the pandemic, and probably has gone up since then. Companies like Walmart are offering big signing bonuses as demand surges.

Many other pieces of getting Jani to my doorstep got more expensive too. Before the pandemic, Viahart paid entry-level workers at its Texas warehouse \$10 to \$11 an hour. Then, this spring, Hart started having trouble finding people. He raised the wage to \$14 to \$15 an hour, which helped him hire enough people to keep the warehouse running. The price of boxes went up to \$2.17 from \$2.03, the result of rising cardboard prices because of the e-commerce surge. FedEx home-delivery shipping, which Hart says is the most economical way for him to get toys to homes, went up 5% this year.

Then there's Amazon. Hart tries to sell stuffed animals and toys on his company's website, but products move much faster when they're listed on Amazon. More than 90% of his revenue comes from toys he's sold on Amazon—but it too is costing him more post-pandemic.

Amazon takes a 15% commission of every item he sells, even the ones like Jani, that Viahart ships itself rather than sending to an Amazon warehouse (Amazon charges for storage space, so it

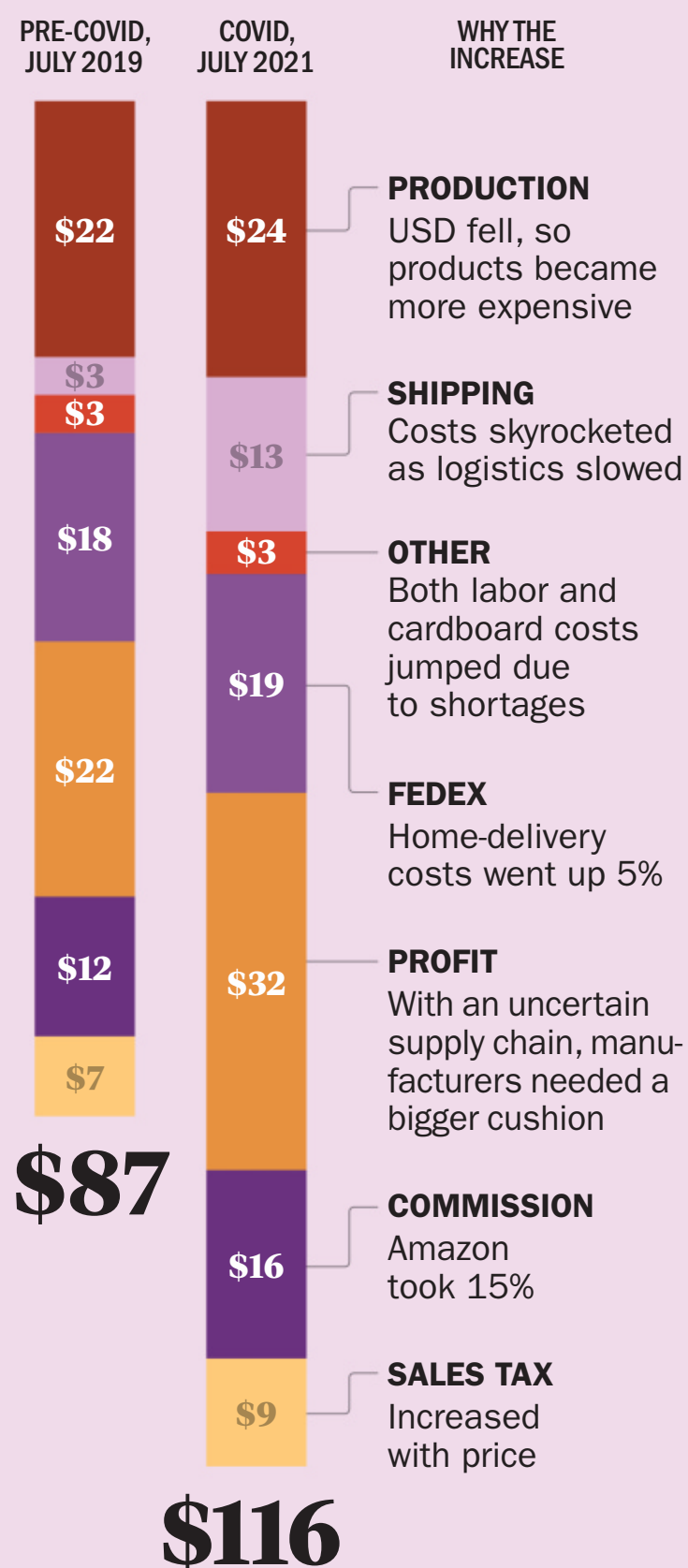
'There's no room for mistakes at all.'

—CARLOS RAMIREZ, TERMINAL OPERATOR



Toy story

From maker to market, the price of our giraffe increased significantly over the last year



doesn't make sense for Viahart to send such a big box to Amazon's distribution centers.) That means as Jani gets more expensive, Amazon takes more money, which in turn makes Jani even more expensive because Hart has to add on those costs to make a profit. Before the pandemic, Amazon's commission was around \$12. Now, it's \$16.19.

I ORDERED JANI on July 12, about seven months after she'd been unloaded in the warehouse. I tracked her journey by truck, from Hart's warehouse to Tyler, Texas, to Hutchins, Texas, then overland to Encino, N.M., where she arrived at 7:20 p.m. on July 14. By 6:22 a.m. the next morning, she was in Essex, Calif.; by 9:21 p.m. that day, she was in Tracy, a logistics hub outside San Francisco. She got to South San Francisco by 4:18 a.m. on July 16, and then ended up on my doorstep in San Francisco at 2:07 p.m.

A very nice FedEx driver named Jemy Balicanta brought her into my apartment building and to my front door, looking a little confused as to why I seemed so awed by the fact that this package had arrived. I kept thinking of the dozens of stops Jani had made along the way, like a pinball bouncing around a crowded machine so much longer than you'd first expect. Before the pandemic, Jani could have gotten from the factory to my doorstep in about 81 days; now it takes 106 days—or (as in my case) longer.

If I was awed, Mike Molson Hart was stressed. He'd hoped that Jani would

come in before the Christmas rush last year, and anticipated that he'd sell out of plush toys. Instead, Jani arrived long after people had completed their holiday shopping. This uncertainty and risk is one more reason prices are going up, Hart says. If he expects to have 3,000 units in stock for the holiday season but gets only 1,000, he has to raise prices to compensate so he can pay his bills. When there's more demand than there is supply, businesses can charge more.

When we spoke, Jani's price still wasn't listed above \$100 on Amazon, and I asked Hart why. The toy company Melissa and Doug sells a similar giraffe, Hart says. If he raises his prices on Amazon and his competitors don't, consumers won't buy from him. But as we talked, he noticed that Melissa and Doug's giraffe was listed as out of stock—probably because of some of the supply-chain snafus Jani had experienced. "Well, maybe we can raise the price," he said.

Jani is standing in my living room, alongside my son's bright plastic piano and stuffed animals and plastic laptop, all of which I'm pretty sure also came all the way from China. It's a little depressing to think of all the energy that was expended to get those toys across the sea, through the ports, on the railways and in a truck to my doorstep. If prices for all those cheap Chinese toys go up, I can't really be upset. A journey that is that much of a headache should cost something, after all. —With reporting by ELOISE BARRY, LESLIE DICKSTEIN and NIK POPLI

PRISONERS IN A CELL
BLOCK BREAK WINDOWS
AND CHANT IN PROTEST AT
THE ST. LOUIS CITY JUSTICE
CENTER, ON APRIL 4





B E H I N D T H E W A L L

HALF A CENTURY
AFTER ATTICA,
PRISONERS ARE
STILL RISING UP
AGAINST BRUTAL
CONDITIONS

BY
HEATHER ANN
THOMPSON

IT HAPPENED IN JANUARY, INSIDE CALIFORNIA'S SANTA CLARA COUNTY JAILS.

In April of last year, it happened at the Westville Correctional Facility in Indiana. It happened two separate times this year alone at the St. Louis City Justice Center. American prisoners erupted, many often refusing to go back to their cells until they were heard. As one man who had spent months confined to the notorious facility in Missouri told a journalist, rebellion is “their only grievance system.”

What motivated these protests was a disastrous COVID-19 response that has left prisons and jails utterly ravaged. There has been no way for those on the inside to isolate from, nor to care for, those who are sick from the virus, and their mortality rate is significantly higher than that of the general population. In federal and state prisons, according to the UCLA Law COVID Behind Bars Data Project, there have been 199.6 deaths per 100,000 people, compared with 80.9 in the total U.S. population. “They are someone’s family,” the mother of a young man incarcerated in the Indiana prison told a local reporter. They are simply asking, she said, “to have open and honest communication about where the virus is and what is being done.”

That the pandemic remains dire behind bars, or that it has fueled protests there, may raise few eyebrows. But the uncomfortable truth is that there have been hundreds of moments of unrest just like these in recent years, dramatic episodes in which America’s incarcerated people have risked extraordinary punishment just to let the public know how bad conditions really are.

The attention people serving time do manage to attract may be laced with surprise, or skepticism. It isn’t that Americans can’t imagine prisons as hellholes; after all, many have seen movies like *The Shawshank Redemption*. But it is as if the disproportionately Black and brown people serving time have surrendered not only their freedom but also any claim on sympathy. Those on the outside are quite confident that the incarcerated today are legally protected from the cruel and unusual tortures of the past and, given that, many are remarkably comfortable with the idea that prisons are pretty terrible places of punishment—comfortable forgetting that how a society doles out such discipline is a reflection of its moral capacity.

It is true that extraordinary effort was put into improving conditions inside America’s prisons and jails back in the

1960s and ’70s. Exactly 50 years ago, from Sept. 9 to Sept. 13, 1971, the nation watched riveted as nearly 1,300 men stood together in America’s most dramatic prison uprising, for better conditions at the Attica Correctional Facility in upstate New York. The men were fed on 63¢ a day; were given only one roll of toilet paper a month; endured beatings, racial epithets, and barbaric medical treatment; and suffered the trauma of being thrown into a cell and kept there for days, naked, as punishment. The Attica prison uprising was historic because these men spoke directly to the public, and by doing so, they powerfully underscored to the nation that serving time did not make someone less of a human being.

Now, despite the protections won by their rebellion, and the broader movement for justice of which it was a part, the incarcerated are once again desperately trying to call the public’s attention to the horrific conditions they endure behind the walls. The 50th anniversary of the Attica prison uprising is an occasion that compels making sense of why that is. These are institutions that we fund as taxpayers and send people to as jurors, and those inside of them are not exaggerating how bad the conditions really are. But how could they have deteriorated so markedly over the past five decades, and why have so many cared so little as it was happening?

The answer to these questions can be found by taking a closer look at what happened at Attica and in its aftermath. Even as key demands were won in the prisoner-rights movement that peaked that long-ago September, the horrific way that state officials chose to end the bold and hopeful protest would have an incalculable impact on criminal justice nationwide for decades to come.

We are firm in our resolve, and we demand, as human beings, the dignity and justice that is due to us by our right of birth. We do not know how the present system of brutality and dehumanization and injustice has been allowed to be perpetrated in this day of enlightenment, but we are the living proof of its existence, and we cannot allow it to continue ...

—Attica Manifesto

WHEN THE INCARCERATED today come together demanding better medical care in the face of COVID-19, they are hoping that laws already passed will be followed and constitutional



ATTICA PRISONERS, RIGHT, NEGOTIATE WITH STATE COMMISSIONER OF CORRECTIONS RUSSELL OSWALD, SEPT. 10, 1971



rights already acknowledged will be honored. The men at Attica believed they also had these rights, but few had yet been secured in either law or policy.

Of the 33 demands that the men at Attica would present to state officials during their four-day uprising, the right to be protected from the cruel and unusual punishment of having their most basic medical needs ignored was one of the most central. For decades, every man at Attica had lived in terror of getting sick. Attica's doctors were notorious. One physician's response to a prisoner's agonized plea for pain medication for a broken hand was infamous: "Write a letter to a different doctor." As the prisoners expressed it most pointedly in the Attica Manifesto, a document they had sent prison officials two months before the uprising: "The Attica Prison hospital is totally inadequate, understaffed, and prejudiced in the treatment of inmates ... There are numerous 'mistakes' made many times, improper and erroneous medication is given by untrained personnel."

Attica's men succeeded in getting New York's Commissioner

of Corrections Russell Oswald to agree in negotiations to "provide adequate medical care," as well as to "access to outside doctors and dentists," and then, in the wake of their rebellion, both houses of the New York State legislature were willing to consider reforms to prison medical care statewide in 1972. Then, in 1976, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its landmark ruling *Estelle v. Gamble*, which established clearly that "deliberate indifference by prison personnel to a prisoner's serious illness or injury constitutes cruel and unusual punishment."

Yet in 2021, and not just as a result of COVID-19, the incarcerated across the country still somehow find themselves much sicker than they need to be, dying unnecessarily painful as well as early deaths. According to journalist Keri Ballinger's investigation for the Marshall Project, correctional systems often hire people to provide care who have few if any qualifications, or even licenses that have been restricted or suspended. And because they can't afford the usurious co-pays many prison systems now require, many prisoners who are ill

Nation

can't even see the doctor to begin with.

Much of prison health care is now privatized, aimed at profits. This means not just billing practices totally unsuited to a prison population, but also the denial of lifesaving procedures. That medical abuses related to privatization are a regular occurrence behind bars is corroborated by the physicians themselves, according to the ACLU. As one Arizona doctor who was expected to provide care for more than 5,000 people revealed, not only were her requests for consults with a specialist always denied, because "it costs too much money," but she also regularly ran out of prisoners' medications.

It is this sort of nightmarish medical care that cost John Kleutsch his life last summer in a Washington State prison. Kleutsch was recovering from outpatient abdominal surgery when a nurse asked to transfer him to a hospital, but the prison's medical director refused. After "multiple days of abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, no exams, no written notes and no plan of care," the *Seattle Times* reported, Kleutsch was finally transferred to the ER, where he died of acute pancreatitis, gastrointestinal perforation and septic shock.

ABYSMAL MEDICAL CARE wasn't the only reason Attica's prisoners stood together. They also regularly experienced abuse at the hands of guards who had total control over them, and this too became a top issue they hoped officials would remedy 50 years ago. And the prisoners made an important mark on history. Their uprising was a real wake-up call to corrections professionals across the country who, thereafter, began insisting on many more hours of guard training. In New York State, specifically, the Department of Corrections began to hold training sessions devoted to "attitudes in supervision," as well as "prejudice" and "minority cultures."

Today, however, in states like New Mexico, it would be hard to convince those trying to serve their sentences that they have a right to decent medical care or to be protected from abusive guards. Not only is a crippling and easily treatable bone disease called osteomyelitis now at "epidemic levels" there, but according to legal documents, when those suffering this painful condition complain that they are being denied the care they need, they risk severe retaliation and solitary confinement from officers.

Even though prison officials vigorously resist outside calls for greater transparency, information that gets out indicates clearly that what prisoners endure in New Mexico is not exceptional.



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A CHAIN GANG OF
WOMEN PRISONERS AT
A MARICOPA COUNTY,
ARIZONA, JAIL IN 2004

In 2012, for example, despite repeated denials from the Department of Corrections that anything untoward had happened to him, it was revealed that in Florida a prisoner named Darren Rainey had been forced into a prison shower by correctional officers and left for two full hours under a spray that registered 180°F, with the doors locked, until his skin began peeling off. Rainey died. None of these officers was held responsible.

In New Jersey's only institution for women, 31 corrections officers and supervisors were recently suspended for abuses. One woman there was beaten so badly while she was handcuffed that she is now confined to a wheelchair, yet she and others like her spent years too fearful to come forward. As they told the Department of Justice, to dare to report anything is to live under the constant "threat of retaliation" from the same guards who assaulted them in the first place.

Those most vulnerable to guard abuse are the minors behind bars, who now total some 52,000 children. Juvenile facilities are not required to tell parents about what's happening to their kids, but because of tenacious journalists we know that in 2021



**THOSE MOST VULNERABLE
TO GUARD ABUSE ARE
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were pushed to protest. But no matter how hard these men pushed during the September uprising, this was one of the demands on which they simply could not get Commissioner Oswald to budge. He would not agree to end solitary, nor would he consider their position that anyone sentenced to isolation must at least have due process.

Since 1971, the capricious and excessive use of solitary confinement has only intensified in America's prisons. Over the past decade, the limited data that outsiders have been able to get out of correctional institutions revealed that between 60,000 and 90,000 Americans were in a solitary confinement cell—but the actual number was likely higher. Whether in segregation for “administrative,” “disciplinary” or “protective” reasons, to be in complete isolation for 22 to 24 hours a day, for days, months and years on end is unequivocally understood to be a form of torture, by the U.N., Amnesty International and numerous medical bodies.

In some places, isolation is used simply as a means of dealing with overcrowding. In Tennessee, for example, county administrators send people awaiting trial

to the state prison because local jails are too crowded, under that state's so-called safekeeping law. Even though these people have not even been convicted of a crime, they are then held in solitary until their trial dates.

As one man, William Blake, wrote of his 25 years in solitary confinement in the state of New York, “If I try to imagine what kind of death, even a slow one, would be worse than 25 years in the box—and I have tried to imagine it—I can come up with nothing.”

COUNTLESS INFRACTIONS COULD land a man at Attica in solitary, but one of the quickest was to refuse to work. The labor they were forced into could be grueling, it paid mere pennies per hour, it had no meaningful health or safety protections, and Black and brown prisoners' jobs were far worse and lower paid than those of white prisoners.

Fury over the injustice of this led Attica's men to launch a sit-down strike for better wages in July 1970, and the issue stayed with them. And, although they were unable to secure an end to

a little boy in a facility in Maine can have his face smashed into a metal bed frame by a prison employee, have his teeth knocked out and then have that same guard refuse him medical care. When the public learned that staff members at a youth facility in Michigan recently restrained a child so viciously that they rendered him unconscious, it was only because that child died.

One of the very cruelest punishments that officers regularly mete out to children in prisons today is to lock them in isolation. When guards threw 15-year-old Ian Manuel into a solitary cell in 1992, it was, according to his memoir, for infractions as insignificant as “having a magazine that had another prisoner's name on the mailing label.” He found refuge in his own mind, writing it was “the only place I could play basketball with my brother or video games with my friends and eat my mother's warm cherry pie on the porch. It was the only place I could simply be a kid.”

In 1971, Attica's men were acutely aware of the importance of stopping this form of punishment. Their demand that prison officials stop placing human beings in segregation—in solitary confinement—had been articulated in writing well before they

Nation

segregation, they did get New York's Commissioner Oswald in fact to agree to "recommend the application of the New York State minimum-wage law standards to all work done by inmates."

Despite these protections, thanks to the Constitution's 13th Amendment, unpaid prison labor is still legal today. In fact, in 2021, every barrier to the use of prison labor that had been in place in 1971 has been eliminated, and there are more than a million more people behind bars available to work for little to no money than there were back then. This has not gone unnoticed. Be it for a private company seeking cheaper labor costs or a governor looking to break collective bargaining agreements, prison labor has become increasingly attractive over time.

In Wisconsin, former governor Scott Walker brought in prisoners to do landscaping, painting and snow-shoveling jobs that used to be done by unionized workers. In small towns like Iola, Kans., incarcerated women are working for the Russell Stovers candy factory. The *Florida Times-Union* reports that prisoners in the state labor in unbearable heat, "running weed-eaters and busting up sidewalks," without sufficient breaks or food. Corrections officers are the foremen, and they motivate with threats of discipline. Working on the road crew earns the incarcerated no money. These same people must still pay for most essentials in prison, and many have children on the outside whom they must still feed. Prison labor also means fewer paid jobs for those on the outside. Over a five-year period, the income not going to either the families of unpaid prisoners or the folks who would have been doing those jobs if free labor weren't available totaled "around \$147.5 million," the report continued. Add in "actual wages and benefits," and the sum is "likely double or triple that estimate."

IT TURNS OUT that it is no accident that the full possibilities of the Attica moment were not realized, that Americans are largely unaware of what the costs of it have been for the people inside our nation's prisons, and that this nation grew so hard-hearted when it came to how people in prison were being treated over the past five decades. This was the outcome intended by state officials 50 years ago.

As those nearly 1,300 men at Attica invited reporters to show the public what prisons really were like, as they brought in observers to oversee negotiations with prison officials, and as they gave passionate speeches about the conditions they had so long endured, Americans across the country found themselves deeply moved. Few liked the fact that these men had taken hostages to ensure that state officials would bargain with them, but they appreciated that Attica's men released those who had needed medical care and took care to protect the rest.

As the days wore on, as more media from around the country descended on the prison, optimism ran high. Crucially, these men's struggle was not taking place in a vacuum. It resonated with other efforts to expand civil and human rights, from Montgomery to Cicero and Selma to Stockton. And by the night of Sept. 12, to widespread astonishment, Attica's men and Commissioner Oswald had managed to come to an agreement on 28 of the 33 demands. A peaceful end was in sight. Lives depended upon Governor Nelson Rockefeller's making it work.

During the long days and nights that they had been negotiating, outside the prison waited more than 600 New York state troopers, itching to retake Attica with guns blazing.



IF THIS NATION HOPES, THIS TIME, TO ACHIEVE A JUSTICE SYSTEM THAT IS, IN FACT, JUST, IT MUST REMAIN EVER VIGILANT FOR ANY ECHO FROM ATTICA

And they would get their wish. On the fifth morning, against the advice of every one of the observers as well as the pleas of his own state employees being held hostage, and with the men inside just waking up, Rockefeller ordered the armed re-taking of Attica.

Within 15 minutes, 128 men were shot and 39 lay dead or dying—prisoners and hostages alike. As one traumatized National Guardsman put it, the troopers' assault left in its wake "more blood, more gunshot wounds and more injuries that day than most people see in a typical day in combat. Certainly, in Vietnam."

And then, stunningly, state officials stepped outside the prison and blamed this carnage on Attica's prisoners themselves. The ostensibly peaceful protest was really about murdering guards in cold blood, the officials told the assembled press. The prisoners had slit the throats of corrections officers, officials said, and one guard had even been castrated.

This lie went out in headlines and on front pages from the



New York *Times* to the Los Angeles *Times* to small-town papers across America. Those who had been rooting for the men in Attica found themselves recoiling in horror. People began questioning not just prisoner rights, but the broader prisoner reform and civil rights movements. When word began circulating of troopers and guards mercilessly torturing the naked and wounded prisoners within minutes of gaining control of the facility, the information was impossible to corroborate.

The way state officials would then cover up what had happened at Attica, and their decision to prosecute 62 prisoners for “riot-related” offenses, would, over time, do incalculable damage to the substantial national public sympathy for prisoners’ rights. Of course, the movement was not crushed immediately. Because broader support for delivering on America’s promises of equality still existed, a great many of the things the men had fought for at Attica would be implemented. This explains how the incarcerated could still get victories like the *Estelle v. Gamble* ruling.

Ultimately, however, for the American public writ large, pummeled not just by mistruths about Attica but also about protester “violence” across the country in this period, there was no coming back. When Governor Rockefeller chose to end the Attica uprising the way he did, he wanted to show the nation he was as tough on crime as the rest of the Republican Party. To do so, he had to lie that these prisoners hadn’t really wanted better conditions, that they were just violent thugs.

The price of believing him was high. The antiprisoner fire

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PRISONERS AT
THE WESTVILLE
CORRECTIONAL FACILITY
IN WESTVILLE, IND.,
DEMAND MORE
HUMANE TREATMENT

that state officials lit on the last day of Attica would, over the next five decades, engulf the nation, even as the prison population jumped by almost 800%—numbers unlike any seen in U.S. history.

TODAY, EVEN MANY of the most tough-on-crime voters have come to recognize that handling so many social and economic problems via the criminal-justice system has cost this nation dearly. And with that recognition has come the very real possibility of criminal-justice reform. But for at least a decade now, attention has been devoted almost solely to the drivers and consequences of this explosion in America’s prison population, not to the places where mass incarceration is experienced firsthand. And even though the criminal-justice reform movement has managed to move mountains on critically important issues ranging from sentencing reform to drug laws, when it comes to reducing the number of people still in prison in this nation, the needle has barely moved.

But just as 1971 was a moment of possibility, so might 2021 be one as well. When the men at Attica stood up for their rights, it was at a time when others on the outside were doing the same. The moment was ripe for change. And so it is again. Americans today, from jails in St. Louis and prisons in Indiana, to cities such as Chicago and Minneapolis, have begun imagining, indeed demanding, a more just and equal future. In states like New York, thanks to this sort of vision, combined with effort from both the inside and outside, long-term solitary confinement will finally be abolished.

But that would have been a different world—one in which Americans back then understood that people serving time were what they remain today: our brothers, our mothers, our children. They are us.

If this nation hopes, this time, to achieve a justice system that is, in fact, just, it must remain ever vigilant for any echo of the lies told at Attica. Had Americans really seen these men’s fates, their lives, their opinions, their expertise and their place in the nation as truly equal to their own, that massacre, the torture, those lies and the criminal-justice crisis that we now live with simply could not have happened. They would not have allowed it.

But that would have been a different world—one in which Americans back then understood that people serving time were what they remain today: our brothers, our mothers, our children. They are us.

Thompson, a professor at the University of Michigan, is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy

Environment

DEEP QUESTIONS





AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN
LIES A SOLUTION TO THE IMMINENT BATTERY
SHORTAGE ...AT A GREAT POTENTIAL COST
TO BIODIVERSITY AND LIFE ON EARTH

BY ARYN BAKER

PHOTOGRAPH BY
SPENCER LOWELL
FOR TIME

Scattered three miles deep along the floor of the central Pacific are trillions of black,

misshapen nuggets that may just be the solution to an impending energy crisis. Similar in size and appearance to partially burned charcoal briquettes, the nuggets are called polymetallic nodules, and are an amalgamation of nickel, cobalt, manganese and other rare earth metals, formed through a complex biochemical process in which shark teeth and fish bones are encased by minerals accreted out of ocean waters over millions of years.

Marine biologists say they are part of one of the least-understood environments on earth, holding, if not the secret to life on this planet, at least something equally fundamental to the health of its oceans. Gerard Barron, the Australian CEO of seabed-mining company the Metals Company, calls them something else: “a battery in a rock,” and “the easiest way to solve climate change.” The nodules, which are strewn across the 4.5 million-sq-km (1.7 million-sq-mi.) swath of international ocean between Hawaii and Mexico known as the Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ), contain significant amounts of the metals needed to make the batteries that power our laptops, phones and electric cars. Barron estimates that there is enough cobalt and nickel in those nuggets to power 4.8 billion electric vehicles—more than twice the number of vehicles on the road today, worldwide. Mining them, he says, would be as simple as vacuuming golf balls off a putting green.

But conservationists say doing so could unleash a cascade effect worse than the current trajectory of climate change. Oceans are a vital carbon sink, absorbing up to a quarter of global carbon emissions a year. The process of extracting the nodules is unlikely to disrupt that ability on its own, but the very nature of the world’s oceans—largely contiguous, with a system of currents that circumnavigate the globe—means that what happens in one area could have unforeseen impacts on the other side of the planet. “If this goes wrong, it could trigger a series of unintended consequences that messes with ocean stability, ultimately affecting life everywhere on earth,” says Pippa Howard, director of the biodiversity-conservation organization Fauna and Flora International. The nodules are a core part of a biome roughly the size of the Amazon rain forest, she notes. “They’ve got living ecosystems on them. Taking those nodules and then using them to make

batteries is like making cement out of coral reefs.”

The debate over the ethics of mining the earth’s last untouched frontier is growing in both intensity and consequence. It pits biologist against geologist, conservationist against environmentalist, and manufacturer against supplier in a world grappling with a paradox—one that will define our path to a future free of fossil fuels: sustainable energy that will run cleaner but also require metals and resources whose extraction will both contribute to global warming and impact biodiversity. So as nations commit to lower greenhouse-gas emissions, the conflict is no longer between fossil-fuel firms and clean-energy proponents, but rather over what ecosystems we are willing to sacrifice in the process.

HISTORY IS LITTERED with stories of well-intended environmental interventions that have gone catastrophically wrong; for example, South American cane toads introduced into Australia in the 1930s first failed to control beetles attacking sugarcane, then spread unchecked across the continent, poisoning wildlife and pets.

Nevertheless, a radical embrace of electric vehicles will be necessary to limit global warming to less than 1.5°C above preindustrial levels, the goal of the Paris Agreement. But according to a May 2021 report by the International Energy Agency (IEA)—the Paris-based intergovernmental organization that helps shape global energy policies—the world isn’t mining enough of the minerals needed to make the batteries that will power that clean-energy future. Demand for the metals in electric vehicles alone could grow by more than 30 times from 2020 to 2040, say the report’s authors. “If supply chains can’t meet skyrocketing demand, mineral shortages could mean clean-energy shortages,” the report argues. Fears of such shortages have countries and companies racing to secure the supplies needed for the coming energy transition.

By most assessments, existing mines on land could supply the needed minerals. But after decades of exploitation, the quality of the ore is going down while the energy required to quarry and refine it is going up. Meanwhile, the efforts to extract cobalt, which is mined almost exclusively in the Democratic Republic of Congo, are dogged by persistent accounts of human-rights and environmental abuses. According to deep-ocean-mining proponents, the seabed nodules could provide most of the minerals the world needs, with minimal impact. “The biggest risk to the ocean right now is global warming,” says Kris Van Nijen, managing director of the Belgium-based deep-sea-mining company Global Sea Mineral Resources (GSR). “And the solution can be found on the seafloor, where there is a single deposit that provides the minerals we need for clean-energy infrastructure.” GSR has already



trialed a 12-m-long, 25-ton nodule-sucking robot that zigzags across the ocean floor on caterpillar tracks, kind of like a giant underwater Roomba. They dubbed their prototype “Patania,” after the world’s fastest caterpillar.

Commercial mining is not yet permitted in international waters. The International Seabed Authority (ISA), the U.N. body tasked with managing seafloor resources, is still deliberating how, and under what conditions, mining should be allowed to proceed. A few private companies, including GSR and Barron’s Metals Company, have scooped up a couple of dozen metric tons of the nodules on exploratory missions, and are now pressuring the ISA to approve commercial operations. Barron is already telling potential investors that he expects to be harvesting nodules by 2024. GSR says that by the time they are up and running, they will be able to collect up to 3 million tons a year with just two of their mining robots.

Not everyone is on board. Scientists,

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The Metals Company’s exploratory vessel, the Maersk Launcher, conducting environmental studies in the CCZ

conservationists, the European Parliament and some national governments are calling for a moratorium on deep-sea mining until its ecological consequences can be better understood. The ocean environment is already under threat from climate change, overfishing, industrial pollution and plastic debris, they argue; added stresses from heavy machinery and habitat destruction could tip it over the edge. Three miles below the ocean’s surface, the deep seafloor boasts some of the most biologically diverse ecosystems on the planet; the perpetual darkness, intense cold and strong pressures foster unique life-forms rarely seen elsewhere, such as a newly discovered ghostly white octopus dubbed “Casper” and an armored snail that researchers believe doesn’t need to eat to survive.

The region may look lifeless, but it is home to thousands of species of tiny invertebrates fundamental to the ocean food web, says deep-ocean marine biologist Diva Amon, whose work is focused on the CCZ. The nodules themselves host microbial life

Environment

forms that scientists are just starting to investigate—they play an important but poorly understood role in the nodules' formation that may be vital for a wider comprehension of how ocean processes work. Removing them would be akin to yanking a couple of wires out of the back of your computer just because you don't know what they're for. "A lot of the life in the CCZ is very small, but that doesn't mean it's unimportant," says Amon. "Think about our world without insects. It would collapse."

The little data available suggests that deep-sea mining could have long-term and potentially devastating impacts on marine life. For example, in 1989, scientists simulated deep-sea mining in an area similar to the CCZ, and in those simulations, marine life never recovered, according to a recent study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*. Plough tracks remain etched on the seafloor 30 years later, while populations of sponges, soft corals and sea anemones have yet to return. If the results of the experiment were extrapolated to the CCZ, the authors concluded, "the impacts of polymetallic-nodule mining there may be greater than expected and could potentially lead to an irreversible loss of some ecosystem functions, especially in directly disturbed areas."

That said, it's a hard call, says Amon. "We want to transition to a green economy. But should that mean destroying a potentially huge part of the ocean? I don't know."

In June, more **THAN 400** marine scientists and policy experts from 44 countries signed a petition stating that the ISA should not make any decisions about deep-sea mining until scientists have a better understanding of what is at stake and all possible risks are understood. The ISA requires permit holders to undertake three years of environmental-impact assessments before it will grant a commercial license, but given the slow-moving nature of the deep sea, scientists say it would be impossible to understand the impacts in such a short time. Nor is it clear on what grounds, exactly, the ISA will evaluate the results of such studies.

A few days later, the debate grew even more heated as the tiny Pacific island nation of Nauru, the ISA member sponsoring Barron's company in a mining application, announced it wanted to start mining efforts, triggering the ISA's "two-year rule," a clause that allows member states to notify the organization of their intention to start deep-sea mining, even if the regulations governing mining have not yet been formalized.

It also triggered international uproar. "Deep-sea-mining companies are peddling a fantasy of untold profits and minimal risks," says Louisa Casson of Greenpeace's Protect the Oceans campaign. "Governments who claim to want to protect the oceans simply cannot allow these reckless companies to rush headlong into a race to the bottom,

In high demand

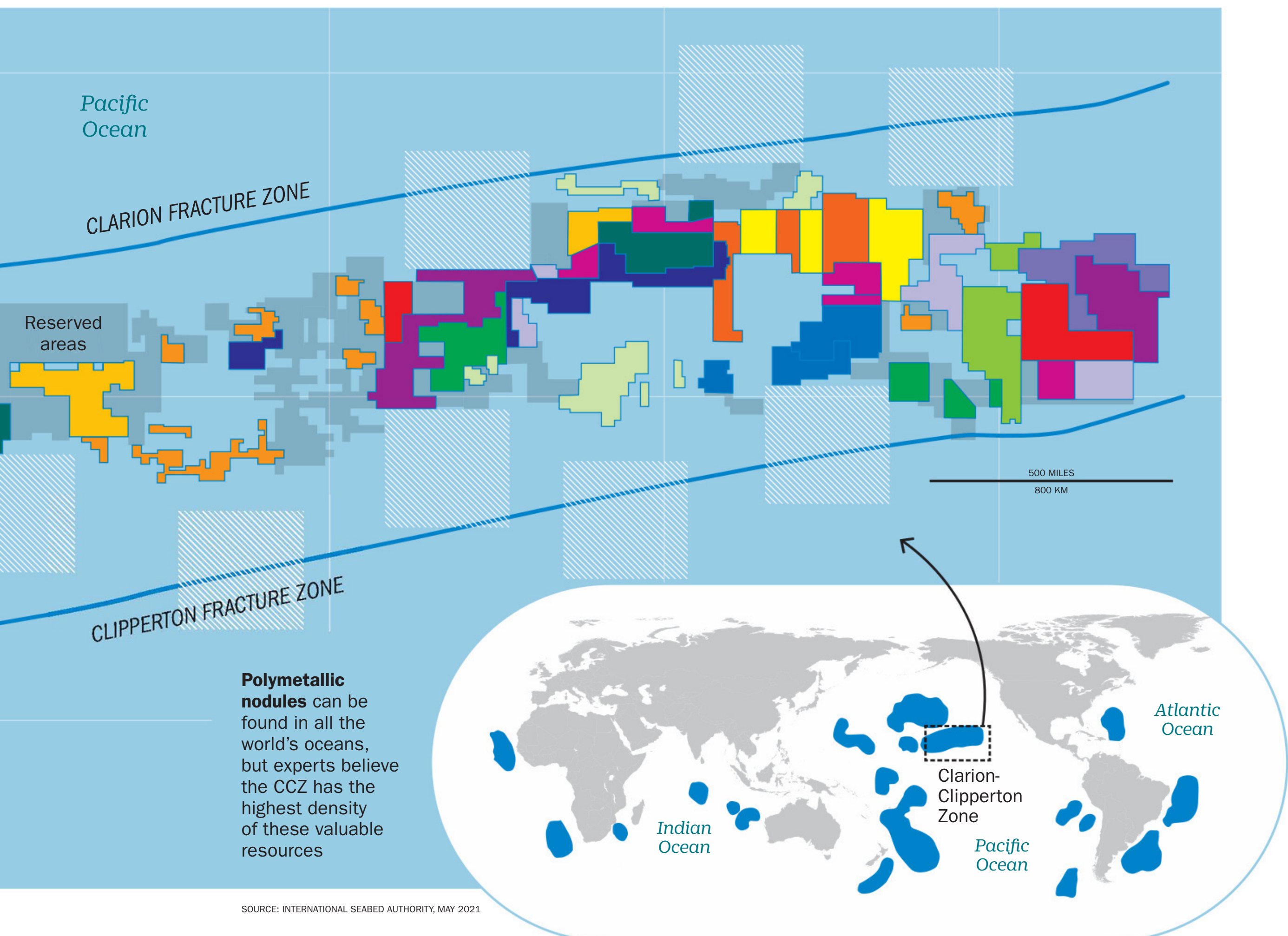
The Clarion-Clipperton Zone is rich in polymetallic nodules that contain minerals needed to make batteries. This map shows which countries have received approval to explore the CCZ for potential mineral extraction, and where.



where little-known ecosystems will be ploughed up for profit and the risks and liabilities will be pushed onto small island nations." Barron, who has invested millions of dollars in preliminary environmental-impact assessments, describes the abyssal plain where the nodules are located as a "lifeless desert" where the impact of mining is likely to be minimal, if felt at all. "I think we are overthinking this. There is a reason why they are full of battery metals. It's so we can make batteries," he says.

IF YOU WERE TO DISCOVER a cobalt seam in your backyard, the revenue would, in most cases, belong to you or your government. But much of the world's known deep-sea metal deposits lies under international waters, which means it belongs to the world.

First discovered in the Arctic Ocean in 1868, polymetallic nodules can be found in almost all oceans, but are concentrated in the CCZ. They were widely regarded as geologic curiosities until the 1960s and



'70s, when several multinational mining consortiums started exploring the potential of the CCZ, with mixed results. Despite an estimated yield of 21 billion tons of nodules, commercial interest in mining the CCZ waned, largely because of high extraction costs and the relative abundance of existing sources of the same metals—particularly nickel—on land. Recognizing that the nodules, along with other potentially lucrative seabed mineral deposits in international waters, should be treated as a “common heritage of mankind,” the U.N. established the ISA in 1994, under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The 168-member-country bureaucracy was tasked with organizing, regulating and controlling all mineral-related activities in the international seabed area “for the benefit of mankind as a whole,” with proceeds shared among those who developed the resources and the rest of the international community.

The treaty gives the ISA two almost mutually

exclusive mandates, says Aline Jaeckel, a specialist on international seabed-mining law at Potsdam University's Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) in Germany: one to administer the mineral resources for the good of mankind, and the other to protect the marine environment from any harm from mining. “They are almost impossible to comply with because any mining will have environmental consequences. There is no way around that. So the question then becomes, How much harm is acceptable?”

Those conflicting mandates may explain why the ISA has yet to issue a single commercial mining permit—and why, in its nearly three decades of existence, it hasn't even agreed on mining regulations, let alone how revenue from the globally owned resource should be distributed. So far, the ISA has awarded 18 exploration contracts in the CCZ to contractors representing China, Russia and the U.K., along with several other European, Asian and island nation-

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states. The U.S., which has not yet ratified UNCLOS, tacitly abides by it but has not sought any mining contracts. Once the mining regulations are formally established, exploration-contract holders can apply for commercial-mining permits.

According to the ISA's mandate, mining revenue from those concessions should be equitably shared among members. Yet industry watchers expect that the organization will establish a royalty fee somewhere from 2% to 6% when it next meets in Kingston, Jamaica. A meeting scheduled to take place in July was postponed indefinitely because of the pandemic. In 2019, a group of 47 ISA members from Africa calculated that the proposed payment regime could lead to a return to member nations of less than \$100,000 a year per country, hardly enough to "foster healthy development of the world economy," as stipulated by the UNCLOS directive to the ISA.

The final amounts could be even less, especially if the ISA establishes more stringent environmental protections, which would require consistent monitoring, an expensive undertaking when it has to happen thousands of miles from port and three miles deep. "The more money put into monitoring, the less gets distributed to the developing states," says Pradeep Singh, a research associate at IASS in Germany who focuses on seabed-mining issues, and who frequently attends ISA meetings as a consultant for member nations. Apart from a small number of private contractors and supporting states who could potentially receive a windfall, he says, few others would benefit.

Any member nation can sponsor a contract

From left:
A Metals Company
core-sample
collector shown
at a harbor in San
Diego on June 8,
after returning
from a deep-sea-
mining mission;
core samples from
that mission; a
team aboard the
Metals Company
exploration vessel
conducting a
survey for species
in the CCZ using
a remotely
operated vehicle

application, but developing nations are given preferential access to concessions with proven deposits, a practice meant to level the playing field. Most sponsoring countries work with their own government-run mining contractors. Nauru partnered with the Metals Company, giving the Canada-based startup preferential access to a 75,000-sq-km area rich in nodules. The details of the Metals Company's agreement with the government of Nauru are not public, but according to the company's regulatory filing with the SEC in advance of its pending public listing, the startup estimates that it will earn \$95 billion over 23 years of production, of which it will pay 7.6% in royalties to Nauru and the ISA. The rest, presumably, goes to the investors that Barron is now courting.

Singh suspects that Nauru's recent triggering of the two-year countdown to mining activity was directly linked to the Metals Company's desire to create investor hype ahead of the listing. Either way, Barron has managed to crown what is at its core an expensive, untested and risky underwater-mining operation with a green halo, promising a surefire—and lucrative, at least for investors—shortcut for saving the planet.

A SELF-STYLED MAVERICK with the requisite long hair, beard and leather jacket, Barron professes to be shocked that conservation groups have not wholeheartedly embraced his plan to mine the ocean for the battery metals that will help replace fossil fuels. The alternative, he says, is to keep plundering terrestrial mines with all

FROM LEFT: SPENCER LOWELL FOR TIME (2): COURTESY THE METALS COMPANY



their devastating environmental and social consequences: biodiversity loss, habitat destruction, contaminated waterways, displaced Indigenous groups and labor exploitation. “If we started mining over again, knowing what we know now, surely we would carry out extractive industries in parts of the planet where there was least life,” he tells *TIME* via video call. “We wouldn’t go to the rain forest. We would go to the deserts. That’s what we have here in the CCZ: the most desert-like place on the planet. It just happens to be covered by 4,000 m of water.”

Even if seabed mining were able to provide metals in sufficient quantities to feed growing demand for electric vehicles, it’s unlikely that terrestrial mining would come to an end. If anything, demand for the metals would increase, as manufacturers engineer based on the availability of more plentiful supplies. Nor would ocean mining necessarily be immune from the oversight problems that plague land extraction. Fishing on the high seas, for example, is highly regulated on paper, but enforcement is weak because of the difficulty and high costs of policing nearly 100 million square nautical miles of open ocean, leading to rampant abuse.

Nor is it certain that cobalt mining will even be all that important in car-battery technology going forward. To start, there are efforts among many battery manufacturers, Tesla among them, to recycle cobalt (among other elements) from spent batteries. More long-term, manufacturers have already started the shift to alternatives. Lithium-iron-phosphate options—which are jokingly referred to as rust-and-fertilizer batteries in the industry for

the everyday ubiquity of their core ingredients—may have a lower energy density than cobalt versions, but engineers are willing to work around those limitations in order to reduce their dependence on imports, says Gavin Harper, a battery metals Ph.D. and research fellow at Birmingham University’s Energy Institute. “They won’t give you the extreme performance [of cobalt battery formulations], but they will give you a more than adequate performance that will meet a lot of people’s needs, without the baggage that comes with [cobalt] chemistries.” Many Chinese EV manufacturers have already made the switch, and Tesla announced in September 2020 that the batteries in its Model S will soon be cobalt-free. Even the IEA in its report noted that EV-battery manufacturers are shifting away from cobalt-rich chemistries in favor of those using cheaper, more readily available materials. “My concern is that we start mining the ocean for cobalt because it is profitable now, but once we move to next-gen batteries and more efficient recycling, we will have done irreversible damage for just a few years of profit,” says Harper.

The polymetallic nodules do contain other valuable minerals, such as nickel and trace amounts of rare earth, that could make mining them worthwhile, says Frances Wall, the principal investigator for the U.K.’s Research and Innovation Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Centre for Technology Metals. But if the nodules aren’t needed for power storage, “it just takes away that magic headline that you are mining the ocean for batteries. And without that, companies might find it harder to raise

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investment.” Without its green halo, the Metals Company becomes just another mining company hawking unproven riches at considerable risk.

Nor is mining in the deep sea exclusively about minerals. It’s also about access and market share. China, which holds three exploration permits in the CCZ (Russia and the U.K. each have two; every other nation that has any has one), invested early in developing deep-sea-mining machinery and is considered to be a world leader in submersible technology. After a tour of a Chinese submersible-mining-tech factory in 2017, Singh, the deep-sea-mining law expert from IASS, was convinced that the country would be the first to dive in. Instead, it seems to be holding back, he says, because leaders there appear unconvinced that nodule mining is commercially viable. As the world’s top manufacturer of solar panels, turbine parts, EV batteries and all manner of electronics, China is also unsurprisingly the world’s top importer of cobalt, buying some 95,000 metric tons annually, mainly from Congo. As long as supplies remain stable, China will have less interest in aggressively exploring seabed mining. Unless, of course, opening up a new seabed source threatens its dominance in the cobalt-refining business. “If someone is going to be at the front of the line with a cobalt supply that could compete, or threaten their position, then China is going to come quickly, and maybe even cut the line,” says Singh.

Meanwhile, China has focused investment on mining in the technologically challenging—and highly controversial—hydrothermal vent deposits of the deep sea, where it holds two additional exploration permits with the ISA. “China wants to do the stuff that nobody else has got access to yet,” says Jessica Aldred, editor of the Oceans special project at China Dialogue Trust, an independent nonprofit organization promoting environmental awareness in China.

AMON, THE DEEP-SEA MARINE BIOLOGIST, has been going to the CCZ since 2013. Each time she returns from a research expedition, it is with a deeper understanding of the complex interactions between the creatures that live at inhospitable depths and the environment that supports them. Her research has shown that those relationships affect neighboring ecosystems as well, impacting biodiversity, feeding patterns and carbon sequestration in ways that scientists have yet to grasp. It has also shown her how much more there is to learn. Barron speaks of “plucking” nodules off the seafloor, but the mining robots work more like vacuums, sucking the nodules up along with a layer of sediment approximately 4 in. deep. Amon describes it as not just clear-cutting a forest but digging up the top 10 ft. of soil as well. She also worries that plumes of disturbed sediment could drift with ocean currents, smothering



habitats miles away with unknown consequences.

Barron, who has already spent \$3 million and committed a further \$72 million to deep-sea research, says that preliminary findings show no such impacts. Amon argues that there hasn’t been enough time to know for sure. “No one is saying never,” she says about mining in the deep sea. “Just not yet. By rushing in, we risk losing parts of the planet and species before we know them, and not just before we know them but before we understand them and before we value them.”

Companies are starting to heed scientists’ call for a moratorium on exploration activities. In March, BMW and Volvo joined other businesses in a joint statement to say that they would not buy any metals produced from deep-sea mining before the environmental risks are “comprehensively understood.” Even the World Bank warned of the



risk of “irreversible damage to the environment and harm to the public” from seabed mining, and urged caution. The mining companies argue that the ISA’s existing research requirements are sufficient. “No commercial licences will be granted by the ISA without a full environmental-impact assessment. If the science shows the deep seabed has no advantages over the alternatives, there will be no seabed-minerals industry,” says Van Nijen, of GSR. He points out that putting a stop to exploration could even be counterproductive. Both GSR and the Metals Company have already invested tens of millions in deep-seabed research. “A moratorium would put a halt to all that,” says Van Nijen. “[Stopping] exploration takes whatever certainty there is for the industry away, which means investment will disappear, which means that research isn’t funded, which means in

▲
The deployment
of *Patania II*,
GSR’s 25-metric-
ton nodule-
collecting robot

10 years’ time, we are in a similar boat as we are today, without a significant advance in knowledge.”

BARRON MAY DISMISS the bottom of the CCZ as a barren wasteland, but his scientists think differently. When the *Maersk Launcher* pulled into San Diego’s port on June 8, after a six-week research expedition to the CCZ sponsored by the Metals Company, the top deck was bustling with 21 marine scientists from eight universities packing up seafloor samples to take back to their labs for further analysis. Lead scientist Claire Dalglish, a marine biologist working with the Seattle-based marine-consulting service Gravity Marine, peered into a box containing a 20-sq.-in. section of nodule-studded sediment that had been stamped out of the seabed with the underwater equivalent of a giant cookie cutter. Pointing with her finger, she identified several species of sea life all but invisible to the naked eye: bryozoans, algae, xenophyophores, miniscule sponges and a delicate fanlike creature called a chiton. “Initially you might look at this and think there’s nothing there,” Dalglish says, “but there’s actually a fair amount of life. It’s just a really small scale.”

None of the scientists on board are ready to say what kind of impact, if any, mining will have. An assessment like that will take years of research, says principal investigator Andrew Sweetman, a marine scientist at Edinburgh’s Heriot-Watt University. This is his eighth trip to the CCZ in the past decade, and on each expedition he has discovered something new: “It’s kind of like being the only person on a planet for the first time. It comes with an enormous amount of responsibility to work out exactly what’s going on. But that’s why we’re out here.” Sweetman doesn’t want to get sucked into the controversies over deep-sea mining, but he does agree that without mining interest, research like his wouldn’t be happening much at all. “With all the investment that the mining companies are putting into the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, it’s probably going to be one of the most well-studied areas on the planet by the time we’re finished,” he says.

Whether or not that research will open the deep sea to mining, he doesn’t know. What he does know is that in the drive to save the planet from human-induced global warming, there will have to be trade-offs. “I’m not for mining, and I’m not against it. We all have to look in the mirror and realize that in order to get electric cars or a new cell phone or a new computer, tons and tons of rock will have to be extracted from either the ocean or the land,” he says. “All I’m trying to do is get the best environmental data so that if mining does go ahead, we know with a good level of confidence what’s potentially going to be damaged, and what the effects are going to be. And then it’s up to society to make the decision to go ahead.”

—With reporting by CHARLIE CAMPBELL/ BEIJING and CORINNE PURTILL/SAN DIEGO

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Class

Educators and staff in the K-12 school system attend to children well beyond the bell, forming a safety net that's both critical and fragile. When COVID-19 closed schools in 2020, time-tested systems fell apart. But educators swung into action, modeling resourcefulness and resilience for their students. In April, when we put out a call for educators and other school employees whose work made students' pandemic learning experience better, we were optimistic that the chaotic academic year would be the last of its kind. But now, before some schools have even started, the coming year is in flux. This salute to educators starts with an essay by Dr. Jill Biden, a teacher for more than 30 years. Then we tell 29 stories of people who went to extraordinary lengths to keep students from falling through the cracks.

—ANDREA DELBANCO, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, *TIME FOR KIDS*

Acts

America's classroom heroes

Like never before, those who educate and inspire our kids have stepped up

BY JILL BIDEN

EVERY CLASSROOM OFFERS A SENSE OF POSSIBILITY amid the worn books and clean whiteboards at the start of the new school year. A new adventure, messy and magical, is about to begin. The anticipation and excitement of this time of year is one of the best parts of being a teacher.

Over a year ago, classrooms closed as COVID-19 shut down our country. The pandemic has been difficult for everyone, and that was especially true for the educators who had to reimagine our lesson plans and rethink our classrooms almost overnight. Cafeteria workers spent long hours making sandwiches for hungry families. Teachers retaught lessons for students who couldn't use the family computer during the day. Bus drivers drove wi-fi hotspots to neighborhoods with no connection. Counselors took call after call from parents in tears, just trying to juggle it all.

Educators across the country worked through the anxiety and unknowns, often while struggling to support their own families at home. As difficult as it has been, I have never been prouder to be a teacher. We put our shoulders back and did the work that needed to be done. We leaned on each other—even from six feet away—and carried the weight of this burden together. America's students and families needed champions like never before, and they found their champions in educators. With all of my heart: Thank you for being the heroes we needed.

As we return to our classrooms this fall, it will

take all of us coming together to keep our schools safe and open. We must remember that our enemy is the virus, not one another.

The pandemic has changed us. It forced our nation to adapt. It showed us how essential our schools are—not just to students and families but to our entire community. Right now, an enormous opportunity exists to transform education. We are coming together to

give our children what they need to thrive—whether it's access to technology or more school nurses. We are building a better education system, one where our students have the same great opportunities to learn, no matter where they live. We're helping families get mental-health support and social services from a place they know and trust: our schools.

Educators, always remember that right now, someone out there is a better thinker because of you. Someone is standing a little taller because you helped her find the confidence she needed. People

are kinder because you showed them what that meant. Your strength and resilience, your creativity and kindness, are changing lives and changing the world.

Our work has never been more seen. As our President sets the course of our country, there is an educator standing right beside him.

Dr. Biden, a classroom teacher for over 30 years, is a community-college professor and the First Lady of the United States



Biden with a Head Start teacher and children in Alabama in 2021

Meet the educators

BY
JASMINE
AGUILERA,
MADELEINE
CARLISLE
AND KATIE
REILLY



IFE DAMON

Multisubject teacher | Staten Island, N.Y.

Ife Damon wanted her high school students to become change agents—especially in a year when the world grappled with a pandemic, health disparities, police violence and systemic racism. So she adapted her lessons to meet the moment.

Last school year, Damon taught ninth- and 10th-grade English at Curtis High School, which serves mostly Black and Latino students within a predominantly white borough of New York City. She instructed her students to make pandemic time capsules that focused not only on COVID-19 but also on the Black Lives Matter movement. Students interviewed a relative or community member about their perspective on the pandemic and created videos about their experience as teens during the past year.

During a lesson on dystopias, Damon, 44, asked students to write about injustices that bother them in the U.S. today. And she expanded a lesson on persuasive writing by asking them to send their essays to people in power. Some petitioned for more sports teams at their school; others called for justice for Breonna Taylor or advocated for LGBTQ rights, while sharing their own experiences with discrimination.

“As a Black woman in America, growing up in American education, these issues weren’t addressed in school,” says Damon, but she believes that such conversations are necessary for the world to change and that they must start with young people. “I wanted them to feel empowered and know that they can make change now.” —K.R.

Melito Ramirez

Intervention specialist | Walla Walla, Wash.

Melito Ramirez still remembers the high school English teacher who showed up at his house and helped him go back to school after he’d dropped out to work and support his family. More than 40 years later, Ramirez found himself in that teacher’s shoes, going house to house to find students who had stopped attending class during the pandemic.

Many had taken full-time jobs to help their families, so Ramirez, who was an intervention specialist at Walla Walla High School until June, worked with parents and teachers to create flexible schedules to help them complete schoolwork amid other responsibilities.

“Their grades just plummeted because they’re tired, they’re working, they’re dealing with other stuff,” says Ramirez, who also delivered food and connected families with resources to help pay bills.

“My job is not to say, ‘You need to get to school. You need to get out there or you’re gonna wind up going to court,’” says Ramirez, 60, who is now the transportation supervisor for College Place, Wash., schools. “My job is to knock on the door and say, ‘Are you O.K.? Do you need something? What can we do to help?’” —K.R.





BRIDGET WEISS

Superintendent | Juneau, Alaska

Compared with other parts of Alaska, Juneau may not be that remote. Still, there are no roads in or out of the city. Food and other supplies have to be barged or flown in, so advance planning is critical. That's something that Bridget Weiss, superintendent of the Juneau school district, is particularly good at. But the COVID-19 pandemic forced her into uncharted territory.

In February 2020, Weiss began working with colleagues to prepare as she followed reports of a spreading virus. In March, a day before the U.S. declared a state of emergency because of COVID-19, Weiss learned that a child in her district had symptoms of the disease. Administrators worked late into the night to prepare a full shutdown and cleaning of the student's school. "That was our first like, 'Oh, now what do we do?' There were no protocols in place," says Weiss, 58. "We had no guidance yet. We didn't even know as a country what symptoms we were really looking for yet."

Weiss persuaded the Juneau city government to let the district

close all schools for a few days so administrators could devise a long-term remote-teaching plan in case of future shutdowns. The Juneau school district quickly trained teachers to lead virtual classes, provided Chromebooks to its 4,600 students and ensured they had Internet access. For those living in areas without Internet service, the district set up wi-fi hotspots in churches and other community centers. Weiss also coordinated with the district's busing company to use its vehicles for daily food deliveries to students—this way, bus drivers could stay employed.

The school district wasn't just a vital resource for its students. Its nurses and health assistants ran a COVID-19 hotline. When vaccines became available for minors, the district had already laid the groundwork to vaccinate them quickly. It inoculated more than 600 students within two days once the age was dropped to 12.

Weiss says partnership was crucial to getting the city and its schools through that first pandemic school year. "I think as a school district in isolation, we wouldn't have been able to accomplish the same," she says. "Nor could the city have [succeeded] without our help." —J.A.

Deana Dueño

Librarian | Reston, Va.

Deana Dueño's elementary-school library speaks to her passion for books. Posters with slogans emphasizing the benefits of reading decorate the walls: "Books bring me joy" and "Keep calm and read on." Shelves of picture books and chapter books cater to young readers.

But during the pandemic, Dueño's biggest challenge became getting books into the hands of children who couldn't come into the cheerful Terraset Elementary School library anymore. So she started delivering books to them, loading up her car and visiting as many as 50 houses every Monday with a curated stack of books for each student. "It just sort of snowballed, but in a good way," Dueño says.

Kids would come running when she knocked at their door. Parents would send photos of their child reading at home. When she popped into virtual classes, she was inundated with requests: "Ms. Dueño, could you please email my parents? I really want books delivered." "Can you make sure I get this book on the next delivery?"

As her district reopened, Dueño, 50, welcomed students back to school this fall, some setting foot in the library for the very first time. —K.R.



HENRY DARBY

Principal | North Charleston, S.C.

Henry Darby didn't sleep much during the past school year. For months, he finished his full-time job as a high school principal in North Charleston, S.C., worked overnight stocking shelves at Walmart and then went right back to North Charleston High School to oversee another day of pandemic learning.

Darby didn't need the extra money for himself. He donated earnings from his second job—which he'd taken as he saw the financial hardship arising from COVID-19—back to his school community, helping students and their families buy groceries, make mortgage payments and cover funeral costs. His school has a high poverty rate and all students qualify for free meals, but the need went well beyond that. Before taking the Walmart job, Darby had begun dipping into his personal emergency savings to help out.

"I just couldn't tell parents and students no, particularly when I knew that they were in need," says Darby, 66. "So the logical next thing for me to do was to get another job." From August 2020 until April 2021, Darby worked at Walmart three days per week, stocking shelves from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m., arriving at school by 7:45 a.m. "I basically slept on the weekends," he says. "There were times that I just could not afford a nap or sleep."

His work earned him the Order of the Palmetto, the state's highest civilian honor. "People helped me as a young child when I needed them the most," says Darby, whose father, mother and grandmother all died before he turned 18. "People really looked out to help me." As students at his school dealt with illness, unemployment and grief, Darby has continued to look out for them. —K.R.



Mark Estrada

Superintendent |
Lockhart, Texas

When schools shut their doors in March 2020, leaving students with no option but remote learning, about 40% of families in the Lockhart independent school district lacked home Internet access. Many lived in dead zones in their rural area. "Even if their families could afford it, it doesn't exist. If you give them a hotspot, they're just paperweights out there," says Mark Estrada, the district's superintendent.

The district worked with Particle Communications, a Texas-based Internet provider, and spent about \$650,000 to build five wireless Internet towers in the district, most of which was later reimbursed by federal CARES Act funding. That enabled 1,600 students to get online at home, including some who used hotspots.

"I knew we were doing the right thing by making this investment, because so many kids are able to be at home and get the Internet that they need without having to work so hard to try to find somewhere to get connected," says Estrada, 39. "When I got to the district 10 years ago, we didn't even have wi-fi in the building, so we've gone from not having wi-fi in our school classrooms to having it in our living rooms across the community." —K.R.

Jennifer DiVasto

Orchestra director |
Doylestown, Pa.

An orchestra relies on community. So how the heck could it be taught remotely? That was the question that Jennifer DiVasto, the orchestra director of Central Bucks High School East, asked herself at the start of the 2020–2021 school year as the pandemic moved classes online.

First, DiVasto asked all 80 orchestra students, ages 15 to 18, to rehearse with their cameras on so she could correct their posture, and to send her recordings of themselves playing. She could feel them getting discouraged as they listened to their mistakes over and over again, but DiVasto, 38, was determined to give the kids a sense of success. So she asked a student who loved filmmaking if he could help her make a music video in lieu of the orchestra's usual fall concert. He agreed, and used a drone to film students, socially distanced, on the school football field playing their instruments. DiVasto mixed the prerecorded audio.

The result was a hit with the students, who did additional videos for their holiday and springtime concerts. "I've been teaching for 16 years. And this is by far the hardest year of teaching," says DiVasto, who has since transferred to a different school. "It was all about celebrating the successes we did have, because that's what keeps you pushing through ... and the kids are what bring the joy. That's why we got into this in the first place." —M.C.





A SCHOOL ‘PONY EXPRESS’

School-bus drivers | Cuba, N.M.

Some call them “a modern-day Pony Express.” Others call them “rock stars.” To students throughout New Mexico’s Cuba independent school district, they’re school-bus drivers who were a lifeline during months of social distancing and remote learning.

“We were their links to school for a while. Other than seeing the teacher on Zoom, they would see us in person,” says Ubaldo Kelly Maestas, 50. “Really the only contact they had with school was us, the bus drivers.”

The Cuba district serves a vast rural area about 80 miles north of Albuquerque. Most students are part of the Navajo Nation, and some live as far as 55 miles from school. For the district’s 13 bus drivers, who can cover more than 300 miles in a day, work sometimes begins as early as 4 a.m. As remote learning took hold, they drove their usual routes, but instead of picking up kids, they delivered food, water, schoolwork, clothing and cleaning supplies. In return, they picked up students’ finished homework or broken laptops and brought them back to school.

“We’re tired and exhausted,” says Tammy Atencio, 37, who is Navajo and grew up in the area of her bus route. But she says it was rewarding to know she was helping students keep learning. “Whatever they’re going through, they can depend on you to bring their schoolwork and bring food.”

In addition to the roughly 700 students in the Cuba district, for several months the drivers also brought meals to about 400 students outside the district who live in the community but weren’t receiving food from their own schools.

“They were really able to put the whole entire school district on their back and make remote learning possible,” says Victoria Dominguez, 31, a district social worker. “Although they had all these tasks, they never batted an eye.”

It was sometimes confusing for young students. “The kids were always asking me, ‘When are you going to start picking us up to go to school?’” says Larry Cebada, who missed joking around with kids and offering them snacks on long bus rides.

When some students returned for face-to-face learning, the drivers picked those students up for school in the morning, then went back out to deliver lunch to kids still learning remotely. Later, they would return to school for the in-person learners and take them home at the end of the day.

“Us drivers joke that we’re Uber Eats, we’re FedEx, we’re the medical attention. We have to take kids’ temperatures every morning,” says Cebada, 61. “We put on a lot of hats.” —K.R.



Andrew Williams

Woodshop teacher | Gilroy, Calif.

Andrew Williams had a front-row seat to the trials of teaching young learners virtually as he overheard his wife, a second-grade teacher, begging students to “pay attention” and “put the dog down,” and noticed how many children were working from one crowded kitchen table with their siblings.

“I thought, We’re not going to learn this way. We’re going to be like this for a year?” says Williams, a woodshop teacher at Christopher High School, about 80 miles south of San Francisco. “I’ve got to help out and do something.”

He started by building a desk for one of his wife’s students, then heard from other families who couldn’t find desks for their children, so he made over 50 more and gave them away to those in need. “They went like hotcakes,” says Williams, 56. “I was buying the material and building them as fast as I could.”

Williams couldn’t teach his own students typical woodshop lessons during remote learning. For a teacher accustomed to hands-on work, the desks became a valuable outlet.

“I was able to save a little sanity myself by staying busy,” he says. “It was really bothering me sitting behind a computer six hours a day. I’m not that kind of guy.” —K.R.

Anna Phelan

First-grade teacher | Philadelphia

Kindergarten graduation is typically Anna Phelan’s favorite day of the year. When COVID-19 ruined her plans for a typical celebration in spring 2020, she dropped off T-shirts, fabric markers and kid-size graduation caps to each of her kindergartners, and held socially distanced celebrations for them at school, one at a time.

And when she realized her students at Overbrook Educational Center in Philadelphia would begin first grade virtually in the fall of 2020, Phelan volunteered to move up a grade to give the children a bit of consistency.

As she saw that virtual learning wasn’t serving many of her students, she compiled binders of everything they needed for upcoming lessons—index cards of words they were learning, writing and math worksheets, art supplies—and delivered them to parents every two weeks. She met them at school, outside their homes and jobs, and even at gas stations.

Phelan, 29, heard from parents who were grateful when she paid special attention to students struggling to learn remotely, who texted her when their child’s reading improved and who thanked her for sending home school supplies.

“I committed to teach these kids in any way possible,” she says. “If I have to be creative, that’s fine. If I have to be driving around the city, that’s fine. But my kids are going to learn.” —K.R.





ALEX CLARK

Phys-ed teacher | Washington, D.C.

Alex Clark tried to make do with virtual physical-education classes. He streamed workouts on Instagram Live, watching students get competitive with one another in the comments. He led virtual classes, asking students to turn on their cameras for moves like high-knee exercises and jumping jacks.

But as Clark, a physical-education teacher, took up biking on his own during the pandemic, he began to think it might be fun for his students too—an opportunity for them to see one another and different parts of Washington, D.C.; to stay active; and to get out of the house. “Our students had so much idle time because there were no extra-curricular activities,” says Clark, who teaches at Dunbar High School, which opened in 1870 as the country’s first public high school for Black students. “All of that was taken away because of the pandemic.”

Clark, 30, sought donations to buy bikes and helmets, and in August 2020, he started leading community bike rides twice a week, offering students extra credit if they participated and encouraging them to bring a friend. Forty-five to 50 students now join each ride, and the program has grown so popular that students from other schools participate.

Other teachers have joined the rides too. “It takes a village to raise a child,” Clark says. “That’s exactly what this program is. It’s a village of people just wrapping their arms around kids.”

On Aug. 30, he kicked off the new school year with another bike ride, persuading about 20 students around the city to ride their bikes to the first day of in-person classes. —K.R.



La’Keshia Johnson

Kindergarten teacher | Okolona, Miss.

From spring 2020 until schools reopened that fall, La’Keshia Johnson never missed a day of delivering meals to students in her rural Mississippi community, volunteering to assemble learning packets and riding on school buses with breakfast and lunch in tow. “We wanted to make sure every student was taken care of,” says Johnson, a kindergarten teacher at Okolona Elementary School. “You’re so accustomed to seeing their smiling faces up and down the hall. The pandemic kind of took that away.”

Knowing that her students were isolated at home, she mailed them letters modeled after the *Flat Stanley* books and encouraged them to write back and include pictures with their “Flat Ms. Johnson” cutouts.

When in-person learning resumed, Johnson, 33, could no longer greet them with hugs and high-fives. But the most rewarding part of her job never changed, as she watched students enter kindergarten unable to recognize letters and leave able to read a book aloud. —K.R.

Jordan Dischinger-Smedes

Science teacher | Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jordan Dischinger-Smedes wanted to ensure that his AP environmental-sciences students could be flexible with study time while dealing with real-life stress from the COVID-19 pandemic. So in April 2020, the 29-year-old launched a YouTube channel, where he teaches students what they’ll likely find on the AP exam.

“YouTube is a place where kids are spending tons of time already,” says Dischinger-Smedes, who has been teaching the AP course at Grand River Preparatory High School for six years.

Through YouTube, he has not only reached his own students, but has also found students from all over the country who would ask questions via comments, and he’s found teachers who are new to the AP course. As of August, the channel had nearly 4,000 subscribers. Some videos have received nearly 30,000 views. “It’s been, honestly, kind of unbelievable to share [this content] with people,” he says.

Still, the most successful tool Dischinger-Smedes has used is empathy. In 2020, some of his students had to take on jobs, he says, and others became caretakers for family members. “That made me take a step back and reframe the importance of the AP exam,” he says. He reminded students not to sacrifice their mental health, and in a recent video he told them, “Your exam score does not define you.” —J.A.





KEITH PRETLOW

Culinary-arts teacher/
Assistant principal | Philadelphia

Keith Pretlow had to get creative. As the pandemic plunged Benjamin Franklin High School into remote learning in March 2020, the culinary-arts teacher needed to find a way to keep teenagers engaged in what was normally a hands-on class, while also overseeing senior activities and pushing students toward graduation in his role as senior sponsor. So 32-year-old Pretlow turned to the Internet, adjusting his teaching style and using Google Meet to demonstrate his recipes. He got an enthusiastic response; some students started sending TikToks or other videos of their cooking attempts. Parents were invited to take part in class and to cook at home whatever recipes the class was trying

out. Pretlow even launched a “Cooking With Chef Pretlow” club, open to the entire school, over Google Meet; he answered questions, and families competed in “plating contests” to see who could make the best-looking dinner. Because not all students had access to ingredients at home, he expanded his curriculum to cover the business side of culinary arts—including Business 101, Accounting 101, hospitality law and food science—in addition to recipes. His goal was to keep the kids invested in their education.

“Kids pick up whatever you put down. If you make it positive, you make it fun, it will be fun and positive for them,” Pretlow tells TIME. “But if we make it a negative situation, then that’s what they’re going to gravitate to.” And he didn’t stay all-virtual. Because he cooked all day for class, a masked

Pretlow would leave meals at the doors of a couple of students’ homes around once a week. “That was a way to stay engaged with the family as well,” he explains.

Remote learning has been destabilizing for many of his students, he says, adding that several died during the pandemic. Not from the disease, he says, but from losing the safe haven school can provide. “For a lot of kids, we are the structure,” Pretlow says. “Not having my kids around, not knowing that the kids are safe, I think that was the hardest part for me.”

Pretlow has since been promoted to assistant principal, so he won’t be cooking with his students when classes resume. “It’s bittersweet,” he says. “But now I’ll be able to impact a lot more kids.” He’s also hoping to be able to see them in person. —M.C.



LESLIE ESTERLY, HEATHER FISHER

Special-education teachers | Reading, Pa.

It didn't take long for special-education teachers Leslie Esterly and Heather Fisher to realize that virtual learning wasn't working for their students. Esterly (*above*) and Fisher teach at Lauer's Park Elementary, and their students include children with physical and mental disabilities who rely on hands-on learning tools. Many are unable to work on a computer alone and need a teacher to guide their hands.

"My students, although they attended, sometimes they would get kind of shut down and not want to work or not want to be on camera and walk away or put their head down and cry. It just wasn't working," Fisher says of her early attempts to teach virtually. "They weren't engaged like I want them to be, and they weren't learning."

Since the start of the pandemic, disability-rights advocates have raised concerns that millions of students with disabilities weren't being served by virtual learning. Last fall, Fisher and Esterly asked their district if they could instead visit students at home and teach them outside one-on-one, wearing face

masks and face shields. They visited five students each, three days a week, bringing supplies to teach puzzles and letters and to model how to follow directions and participate in class.

"I taught on kids' front porches; I taught on the back deck. I taught in the front yard. I taught in the backyard," says Fisher, 32. "You could see the change in my students' demeanor. They were happy to see me. Their eyes lit up."

When winter weather made outdoor learning untenable, the teachers met with students one at a time inside a district building. "My job is to meet their needs, however I can," says Esterly, 39. "As long as they were safe, we were willing to do it."

By April, both teachers had returned to their classrooms with students whose parents were comfortable resuming in-person instruction. Their district is offering full-time in-person learning this fall.

"Teaching's my passion," says Fisher, who is eager to see all her students back in her classroom again. "When my students aren't learning the way that they should be or are not getting the most out of what I'm teaching them, then I have a problem. I can't just sit back and do nothing about it. I have to act on it." —K.R.

Kimberly Pokrandt

School nurse |
Pine Island, Minn.

Kimberly Pokrandt used to be a neonatal nurse in an intensive-care unit, but she says contact tracing in her school district and advising students when to quarantine was "the hardest thing I've ever done in my entire life."

It meant asking students for specific details about their lives: whom they'd sat next to in class, or who was in their car pool. During football season, it meant telling players they had to miss a game and hearing from angry parents, "telling me I ruined their child's life."

Contact tracing was one of many responsibilities that Pokrandt, a nurse for Pine Island public schools, took on to keep kids in school. She held COVID-19 vaccine clinics for children ages 12 and up, and for adults who wanted to be vaccinated by someone they trust. "If I'm modeling what we need to do to get out of this situation, I think they're more likely to do it," says Pokrandt, 42. "School nurses really had to be leaders throughout this pandemic. Nurses in the hospital are not doing the contact tracing or quarantining kids from school and managing that health care. The school nurses are." —K.R.



PEDRO DONES

Math teacher | Bronx, N.Y.

Pedro Dones isn't your typical math teacher. A professional wrestler in his spare time who jokes that he's the "prince of positivity," Dones transformed into his wrestling alter ego, the Big Action, to make virtual lessons more entertaining for his seventh-grade students. "When we're in class, there's magic. We're dancing, we're singing, we're jumping up and down," he says. "I had to bring that pizzazz into my videos."

He donned a purple and gold sequined suit and taught students about dividing fractions by comparing an equation to a wrestler's backflip. He explained perimeter and area by using a wrestling ring as a visual example. "It was a complete game changer," says Dones, 38, who teaches at the Academy for Personal Leadership and Excellence in New York City. "You've got to do whatever it takes to keep the kids engaged, to be there for them, because we were their only lifeline of interaction."

Dones says he prioritized empathy over math, offering flexibility on assignments as students faced challenges at home, including one who couldn't complete online assignments until after midnight, when her mother got home from her job as a nurse and handed over her cell phone. He created a math channel on YouTube to better reach students, and offered virtual tutoring. "These kids need me, and I need them," he says. "I need to be there for them."

The pandemic impacted his students differently. Some thrived during virtual learning, while others struggled with loss and isolation. As he plans for the coming school year, Dones is keeping that in mind. "Embrace the technology. Embrace the creativity," he says. "And don't have a one-size-fits-all model of teaching." —K.R.



Karalee Wong Nakatsuka

History teacher | Arcadia, Calif.

On March 17, the day after a gunman in the Atlanta area killed eight people, including six women of Asian descent, Karalee Wong Nakatsuka knew she had to change her lesson plan. Instead of focusing on Ellis Island, the eighth-grade teacher at First Avenue Middle School decided to examine the history of anti-Asian discrimination in the U.S. Her district is about 70% Asian American and Pacific Islander, and students had been confiding in her about their fears of anti-Asian hate crimes amid the pandemic. Some parents no longer let their kids walk around alone.

Nakatsuka's first priority was making students feel comfortable speaking up about their feelings and experiences. "The class bonded ... [we] could really talk to each other," says Nakatsuka, 54, who encouraged them by sharing her own history as a granddaughter of Chinese immigrants. Nakatsuka says the pandemic, and the social issues it stirred, has highlighted how learning history can help people become better citizens. "Our students learn citizenship is important," she says. "We have to understand, 'What does it mean to be American?'" —M.C.

Jacqueline Washington

School culture facilitator | Detroit

The food banks around Detroit know Jacqueline Washington as a regular. For over a year, she visited as many as she could every week, filling her minivan with groceries and delivering them to the families of Clippert Multicultural Magnet Honors Academy, where more than 80% of students are eligible for free lunch.

It began when Washington, whose official title is school culture facilitator, started hearing from families who needed help getting food or paying bills at the start of the pandemic. She and a school counselor organized a spreadsheet to keep track of each family's needs, and Washington asked her principal for permission to make the deliveries herself, taking food and other essentials to her own students and to families from neighboring schools. She brought diapers, toilet paper and dog food to a mother whose husband had recently died of COVID-19. "When I gave her the bag and popped the hatch, and she saw all the food, she broke down and sat on the curb and started crying," says Washington, 63. "That's the moment that I knew that maybe I'm making a difference."

When she realized how many people in her neighborhood were elderly or didn't have cars to get to a food bank, she picked up extra food and set up a makeshift "grocery store in my front yard."

"You can't start helping people and just stop when you know the need is there," she says. "The need is not going to go away." —K.R.



The Lit Ladies

Teachers | St. Paul, Minn.

If you walked around St. Paul in the fall of 2020, you might have run into the Lit Ladies, camped out in a gazebo, huddled near a space heater in a park, or handing out hot cocoa by the zoo. Wherever you found them, they were sure to be surrounded by books, running their LitMobile.

The traveling library was born from a conversation that Lisa Schibel, Linda Morrison and Sarah Schupanitz—sixth-grade language arts teachers in Capitol Hill Magnet School—had in summer 2020, as a semester of remote learning loomed. “We were just getting our bearings straight and thinking, ‘Oh my gosh. What are we going to do? How are we going to get books into our students’ hands?’” Morrison, 58, recalls.

Someone mentioned ice cream trucks—and Schibel, 47, had an idea. What if they brought books to kids? They got to work, moving books they had in their classrooms into bins and buying more with donor funds. The LitMobile operated in different public parks for a week each month, and the trio and two other teachers carried the mountains of books in their own cars.

Schupanitz, 31, estimates that 60 to 75 students showed up some days. One of the biggest takeaways, Morrison says, was “the importance of getting books into children’s hands.”

While rewarding, running the LitMobile could be grueling, as on the day a storm dumped more than six inches of snow on the city. As the Lit Ladies sat near space heaters, students checked out books, drank hot chocolate and had snowball fights with friends. “It was so ridiculous,” Schupanitz says, “yet so joy-filled at the same time.” —M.C.



Georgiana Guzman

Food-service worker | Santa Cruz, Calif.

When schools closed in the spring of 2020, Georgiana Guzman, a food-service worker for Gault Elementary School, knew that many children wouldn’t just miss classes; they’d also miss meals. So she started serving lunch outside the school. Only a few students showed up—families either didn’t know Guzman was there, or they couldn’t get to her. Guzman brainstormed with her principal and their director of food services, and they decided to take the meals to the kids instead. The Santa Cruz city schools district opened four outdoor meal-pickup sites for all students. The district serves 7,000 kids—roughly 90% of whom qualify for free lunch—in Santa Cruz, about 70 miles south of San Francisco. Guzman, 41, served an average of 90 to 170 meals a day, five days a week, for a year. Grateful parents offered her cocoa or tea; kids wrote her thank-you notes. Those moments helped keep Guzman going. “What motivated me was to just feed the families,” Guzman says. “That’s what I was thinking, to not let my kids go without a meal.” —M.C.



MICK SIMPSON

Custodian | Vacaville, Calif.

Mick Simpson noticed that kindergartners seemed a little scared when they returned to the school building in the spring and saw him walking around with a backpack of disinfectant, spraying everything down. So he got playful, decorating his gear with a *Ghostbusters* sticker and dubbing himself the “COVID Buster.”

“I try to keep it fun and exciting to



come to school,” says Simpson, 50, a custodian at Alamo Elementary School in Vacaville, Calif.—a city of about 97,000 residents, roughly 55 miles northeast of San Francisco.

His job took on added urgency during the pandemic, as keeping classrooms clean became an essential part of keeping children in school. When students returned to the building in March, after a year of virtual learning, Simpson cleaned every classroom and bathroom once during lunch and again at the end

of the day, disinfected equipment for gym class, and reminded students to keep their masks on and stay a safe distance from one another.

He also participated in some of the school’s morning videos during remote learning, dressing up in costumes, including Captain Underpants and SpongeBob SquarePants, and reading announcements in character. And last summer, when school buildings were still empty of children, Simpson decided to paint a mural of more than

30 children’s TV characters in one of the school bathrooms. When he finished shifts of deep-cleaning classrooms and rearranging furniture, he spent his free time painting Mister Rogers, Winnie the Pooh, Big Bird and the Pink Panther. He says his students love it.

“I think the custodian is kind of the hidden superhero of all schools,” Simpson says. “I’ve been roaming this planet for 50 years and finally figured out what I want to be when I grow up, which is a custodian.” —K.R.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CAYCE CLIFFORD FOR TIME

BRIAN FOX, KARLA ZAMBRANO-ARMIJOS

And the SF Loves Learning program team

Karla Zambrano-Armijos had no idea why she had been summoned suddenly to a meeting one morning in March 2020. She certainly didn't expect Brian Fox, an administrator with the San Francisco unified school district, to ask her to help coordinate an hour-length daily TV show for the city's kids during lockdown. The first episode of the show, tailored to kindergartners through second-graders, would air in two weeks. Zambrano-Armijos, a family-support specialist, was selected because of her expertise in early-childhood education, and under Fox's leadership, she and several other educators were tasked with producing the show, *SF Loves Learning*, to air on the local KTVU Plus channel and to stream on YouTube. To get it done, Zambrano-Armijos says, they "called on the city." The city responded, with government and cultural institutions helping to provide material for lessons. "We were just living hour by hour, just trying to get it done. It was insane," says Zambrano-Armijos, 39. All the while, each team member worked a regular day job. But they got it done. The show ended up running for three seasons, longer than anyone expected. "I [taught] a second-grade class by day and the rest of San Francisco by night," says Jade Meza, 27, Season 3's daily teacher. There are no plans for a Season 4, but many episodes are online, and some teachers are planning to incorporate segments from them into their lesson plans. And Zambrano-Armijos hopes all that hard work will keep educating kids for years to come. —M.C.



Amanda Breheny

Spanish teacher |
Queensbury, N.Y.

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced students into remote learning, Amanda Breheny brought the world to them.

The 41-year-old Spanish teacher at Queensbury Middle School, about 215 miles north of New York City, welcomed guest speakers from as far away as Mexico and Honduras to teach her students about the importance of access to clean water.

Students learned in Spanish while people on the ground in Honduras explained the challenges of accessing clean water there. Breheny says the pandemic helped many of her students appreciate the severity of lacking clean water. "For them to learn that there are kids that go home and they can't wash their hands during a pandemic, that just, I think, it really hit home with them," she says.

Students in Breheny's classes launched an awareness campaign, creating videos in both English and Spanish about the importance of clean water. They raised about \$100 to purchase a water-filtration system for a family in Honduras.

Breheny plans to continue using technology to connect students with people around the world. "In the coming years," she says, "I can work with a teacher in Honduras or in Mexico or Guatemala with my Spanish students sitting here in upstate New York." —J.A.

Glenda Moton

English teacher |
North Miami, Fla.

Glenda Moton says the pandemic changed everything about her job. She taught English to ninth-graders whose first year of high school was upended by the pandemic, and she worried there wasn't enough focus on how they were managing. "Did anyone really sit down and ask the kids, 'How are you feeling? What's going on?'" she says.

Moton, 66, turned those questions into an assignment, asking her students at North Miami Senior High School to write about their pandemic experience, and then publishing their work in a book. "It was important that I hear their voice, their story, so that I could help them conquer some of those fears and be able to have a successful year," says Moton. In poetry and prose, students described worries about losing family members and finding that "nothing will ever be the same again." They also voiced hopes: for a COVID-19 cure, reunions with friends, and "a better and healthier world."

The book helped Moton learn about what her students were facing and how she could help. "I saw them in a different light," she says, "and I saw life differently." —K.R.





ARTHUR SEABURY

Social worker | Kansas City, Mo.

During the 2020–21 school year, Arthur Seabury saw an uptick in students who needed their clothes washed. Some couldn't take their items to laundromats that had closed or that didn't allow for social distancing. Some didn't have washing machines at home. And some, Seabury guesses, didn't have a place to call home.

So Seabury began utilizing a discreet system: students could bring him a backpack of clothes, which he would wash at school. At the end of each day, he'd return the clean clothes to their owner.

It was just one of the services that Seabury provided at Hogan Preparatory Academy, a public charter that serves 1,040 elementary-, middle- and high school students. All of them are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, according to the school. The district has the highest rate of homelessness in the Kansas City metro area; according to officials, nearly 24% of students are considered to be experiencing homelessness.

Seabury, 63, a social worker at Hogan for nine years, knows what the students are going through. He grew

up in the area and experienced poverty and an unstable home life as a child. "I had a few people in my life that helped me through the times that I felt like giving up," he says. "I knew that I could help people."

Seabury realized the seriousness of COVID-19 when one of his students lost his grandmother to it. "I think this was before we even knew it was a pandemic," says Seabury, who contracted the disease shortly afterward.

Once he recovered, Seabury became a source of support as schools shut down. He knocked on doors to find students and connect them to remote classes. He organized food vouchers and delivered meals to those in need. For those facing eviction, he helped place them in transitional living programs. And of course, he ensured they had clean clothes.

Seabury knows this school year will be challenging, and has already begun workshops to help educators in the district support students who have experienced trauma. "Now that the pandemic has happened, behaviors have changed in some people," he says. "So we have to get in and go back to work so that those kids don't get away from us." —J.A.

Tiffany Jackson

Math teacher | Nashville

For Tiffany Jackson, the pandemic showed just how ill-equipped schools are to serve immigrant students. Jackson teaches math to students who have recently arrived in the U.S. and who are learning English at John Overton High School and Glencliff High School. During an unpredictable academic year, many of their families relied on Jackson to connect them to resources in school and beyond.

She received texts daily from students: "'Hey, I'm having this issue with my housing,' or 'I need to take a COVID test and I don't know how to do it,' or 'My father died, and I can't come to school because my family needs me,'" says Jackson, 41. "It forced us to have a way more intimate peek into the lives of our students than ever before."

She worked at the district's food-distribution drive-throughs, interpreting for Spanish-speaking families. When one student lost his father to COVID-19, she and other teachers collected money for his family and attended the funeral. "We all rallied around him," she says. "I think that represents the community that we have. We're here with you." —K.R.





VICTORIA DOMINGUEZ

Social worker | Cuba, N.M.

Victoria Dominguez didn't know how extreme her students' needs were before the pandemic. But when schools closed and she began visiting students' homes to check on them, she realized how many families were enduring a health crisis without electricity, water or enough food.

"We found out that school, for the majority of our kiddos, is a safe place, whether they're experiencing hunger or homelessness or witnessing domestic abuse," says Dominguez, a social worker and community schools director for the Cuba independent school district, a rural, high-poverty district that mostly serves students from the Navajo reservation. "I realized that there is such a huge need for basic resources."

Dominguez, 31, started Cuba Cares in spring 2020 to meet those needs, expanding a clothing drive into a much broader effort to bring food, clothing and other supplies to families. She connected students with social-emotional resources and helped families find shelter. When kids weren't attending virtual classes, she knocked on doors to make sure they were O.K. "We're really just trying to help out students and families with their basic needs, so that way when it's time for school, they can focus on school," she says.

As more students return to classrooms this fall, she's bringing in therapy dogs and coordinating lunch groups to help them feel comfortable. And she wants Cuba Cares to be a resource long after the pandemic ends. "School is so much more than a place to learn." —K.R.

Michael Hinojosa

Superintendent | Dallas

As the Delta variant spread through Texas this summer, Michael Hinojosa found himself at the center of a battle over masks, facing down the Republican governor and some angry parents who disagreed with his requirement that students and school staff wear masks. But Hinojosa, the superintendent of the Dallas independent school district, was undaunted. "Luckily, I was also a basketball referee, and for seven years, everybody was always yelling at me," he says. "I learned how to have a thick skin."

Dallas was the first district to defy Governor Greg Abbott's ban on school mask requirements, but others have followed. The CDC recommends that students and staff wear masks, but parents are divided along partisan lines. Superintendents are caught in the middle.

"I'm in a blue city in a purple county in a red state, and I've had elected officials, appointed officials and medical officials give me different—and conflicting—advice," Hinojosa says. "We're hung out there to dry, and we've just got to make a decision to protect as many families as we can." —K.R.



Time Off

A cluster of approximately ten black and white striped clapperboards is shown falling from the sky. The clapperboards are in various orientations, some tilted, some horizontal, and some vertical. They are set against a background of a blue sky with soft, white clouds. At the bottom of the frame, a vibrant red carpet is visible, and the clapperboards are casting long, dark shadows onto it.

fall arts preview

A bounteous season at the movies

PLUS:

Requiem for the network comedy / the millennial novel
rules the market / the most anticipated music and games /
and all the entertainment to look forward to this fall

PHOTOGRAPH BY THOMAS ALBDORF FOR TIME

Time Off is reported by Eloise Barry and Simmone Shah

This fall will be a season of movie riches—and perhaps a turning point

BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

EVERYONE HAS THE TEA leaves; no one has the actual tea. Will the movies come back this autumn? Will they ever come back at all?

The answer is... that no one has the answer. What we do know is that the fall 2021 movie calendar is unlike anything we've seen in years: more varied, more exciting, more studded with actors we really want to see. Timothée Chalamet and Zendaya jet into the future for Denis Villeneuve's version of Frank Herbert's supposedly unfilmable sci-fi epic *Dune*; Adam Driver and Lady Gaga swan through Ridley Scott's juicy-looking *House of Gucci* (just one of three movies Driver stars in this fall, two of them directed by Scott); Oscar-winning *Nomadland* director Chloé Zhao tries her hand at the superhero genre with *Eternals*, starring Salma Hayek and Angelina Jolie. And don't forget the long-delayed Bond thriller *No Time to Die*, as well as the wild Cannes Palme d'Or winner *Titane*, which redefines the notion of what makes a car sexy.

What we don't yet know is whether people will want to see these movies in theaters or if, their curiosity piqued, they'll just wait until they're available to stream. (*Dune* is set to have a dual release in theaters and on HBO Max.) Until a few months ago, everyone thought that movie fans—vaccinated ones, at least—would be flocking to theaters for big-ticket comedies and comic-book movies but would be more likely to watch more adult-oriented pictures via streaming. That has proved only partially true. Box office returns for *Black Widow*, released simultaneously in theaters and on Disney+, were disappointing, but the Ryan Reynolds comedy *Free Guy* and the Aretha Franklin biopic *Respect*—both of which opened in theaters, with streaming to follow—have lured a respectable number of moviegoers from their pandemic-era lairs.

Even so, with valid fears about the Delta variant swirling, this may not be the fall we return en masse to theaters.

But whenever it truly is safe to venture back, the success or failure of big-screen moviegoing will hinge on movie lovers' desire for a certain experience. People who want to go back to the movies really want to go back; their idea of what movies can and should be hinges on a vision writ large in their imaginations. Other, more indifferent viewers are happy to welcome the increasingly popular at-home delivery methods. Either way, studios will find ways to make money off their products, though if movie attendance does plummet, it's exhibitors who will suffer.

We must face the possibility that our movie future will be more splintered than ever before, with moviegoers branching into two poles. Multiplexes will survive, because mainstream blockbusters, for the foreseeable future at least, will still draw their audience. Yet there will always be people who want to feel they're plugged into the larger world, who want to be able to see on the big screen the smaller or non-Hollywood movies they read about, films by Pedro Almodóvar or Pablo Larraín or Claire Denis.

Admittedly, that won't be possible in every part of the country, or the world. But our pandemic experience may have a silver lining for cities and towns that already have art-house cinemas. Those who are perfectly happy to stream everything are already lost. But how many more out there are exhausted, or at least just underwhelmed, by the small-screen experience?

In the end, it's too convenient to point to the pandemic as the single biggest factor in these shifting habits. More realistically, our long months of semi-confinement merely accelerated changes that were already under way. But however we got here, and wherever we're going, we should treat this abundant autumn as a blessing, a reward for having survived a trying time. The future of movies is unwritten, but let's get through this harvest—a rich one—before we chisel the epitaph.

9.3

CINDERELLA

The fairy tale gets a modern retelling as a jukebox musical starring Camila Cabello. This Ella is trying to land not just a prince but a career as a dressmaker. Billy Porter plays the fairy godmother, with Idina Menzel as the stepmom. (*Amazon Prime*)

9.3

SHANG-CHI AND THE LEGEND OF THE TEN RINGS

The kung fu master Shang-Chi debuted in Marvel Comics in the 1970s. Here, in the form of *Kim's Convenience* star Simu Liu, Shang-Chi finds himself unable to escape the long shadow of his family's connection to the powerful crime organization that kidnapped Tony Stark in *Iron Man*.

9.10

THE CARD COUNTER

Oscar Isaac plays a genius poker player trying to outrun the trauma he absorbed as a military interrogator when a chance at revenge against an old nemesis (Willem Dafoe) threatens to derail it all. *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull* writer Paul Schrader directs.

9.17

BLUE BAYOU

Justin Chon's *Gook* was acclaimed for its story of two Korean-American brothers confronted with violence during the Rodney King riots. In *Blue Bayou*, he stars as an adoptee with roots in Louisiana who learns he will be deported.

9.17

THE EYES OF TAMMY FAYE

Televangelists Tammy Faye and Jim Bakker built a Christian commercial empire via singing, puppetry and a theme park—only to see it collapse under scandal. Jessica Chastain—who, thanks to prosthetics, is unrecognizable as Tammy Faye—stars opposite Andrew Garfield.

9.24

DEAR EVAN HANSEN

Ben Platt could hardly have won more accolades for portraying the anxious teen protagonist of *Dear Evan Hansen* on Broadway. He reprises his role in this adaptation, which traces an

FROM LEFT: MGM; NETFLIX; WARNER BROS.; MARVEL STUDIOS; FOCUS FEATURES; WARNER BROS.; MGM



From left: Lady Gaga in *House of Gucci*, Regina King in *The Harder They Fall*, Will Smith in *King Richard*, Simu Liu in *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, Anya Taylor-Joy in *Last Night in Soho*, Timothée Chalamet in *Dune* and Daniel Craig in *No Time to Die*

awkward high schooler as a small lie balloons out of his control.

10.1 **THE MANY SAINTS OF NEWARK**

One of the greatest characters in TV history gets an origin story in this *Sopranos* prequel. In the '70s, a teenage Tony grows up in war-torn Newark, where his uncle Dickie shows him the ropes. Michael Gandolfini steps into his dad James' iconic role. (HBO Max)

10.8. **NO TIME TO DIE**

Daniel Craig will play James Bond one last time in this film directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga with screenwriting from Phoebe Waller-Bridge. New faces include Craig's *Knives Out* co-star Ana de Armas and Rami Malek as the villain.

10.15 **THE LAST DUEL**

Ridley Scott put Matt Damon in an astronaut suit for *The Martian*; now he puts him in a suit of armor in 14th century France. When the knight's wife (Jodie Comer) accuses his best friend (Adam Driver) of rape, he agrees to a trial by combat to the death.

10.22 **DUNE**

Frank Herbert's 1965 novel *Dune* is considered a sci-fi masterpiece, but successful adaptations have proved elusive. Now, Denis Villeneuve (*Arrival*) takes up the challenge, covering about half of Herbert's first book. Timothée

Chalamet plays the young hero caught up in a cosmic war.

10.22 **THE FRENCH DISPATCH**

In his 10th feature, Wes Anderson brings to life stories from the film's titular *New Yorker*-inspired American weekly published in the fictional city of Ennui-sur-Blasé. The ensemble anthology unites Anderson newcomers (Timothée Chalamet, Elisabeth Moss) with regulars like Bill Murray and Tilda Swinton.

10.22 **THE HARDER THEY FALL**

A quarter of cowboys during the peak of westward expansion were Black, but their history has been largely ignored by Hollywood. Regina King, Idris Elba and Jonathan Majors don stirrups and pistols for one of several projects reintegrating Black cowboys into western lore. (On Netflix Nov. 3)

10.22 **LAST NIGHT IN SOHO**

In Edgar Wright's psychological thriller, a young woman (Thomasin McKenzie) finds that while asleep, she can transport herself into the body of a '60s pop idol (*The Queen's Gambit*'s Anya Taylor-Joy). But her glamorous reveries soon turn disturbing.

11.5 **ETERNALS**

Chloé Zhao, coming off a Best Director win at the Oscars for *Nomadland*, brings her precise

touch to Marvel's story of a group of peaceful immortals (Angelina Jolie and Salma Hayek among them) forced to come out of hiding to protect Earth.

11.5 **SPENCER**

Pablo Larraín created an artful, lonely portrait of Jacqueline Kennedy in 2016's *Jackie*. Now he takes on the interior life of Princess Diana, with Kristen Stewart playing the unhappy royal.

11.11 **GHOSTBUSTERS: AFTERLIFE**

Jason Reitman takes the proton pack from his *Ghostbusters* director dad Ivan, helming the franchise's next chapter. It stars Finn Wolfhard (*Stranger Things*), Carrie Coon, Paul Rudd and some familiar phantom-fighting faces.

11.12 **RED NOTICE**

Three of Hollywood's biggest action stars—Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Gal Gadot and Ryan Reynolds—team up for a heist film with Johnson as an FBI top dog, Gadot as an art thief and Reynolds as a con artist. (Netflix)

11.12 **TICK, TICK ... BOOM!**

Before Jonathan Larson was immortalized via *Rent*, he wrote this autobiographical musical about a neurotic theater composer. Lin-Manuel Miranda, a Larson megafan, directs this adaptation starring Andrew Garfield. (On Netflix Nov. 19)

11.17 **THE POWER OF THE DOG**

In her first movie in over a decade, decorated New Zealand filmmaker Jane Campion directs Benedict Cumberbatch and Kirsten Dunst in an ominous, gorgeously saturated western set in 1920s Montana. (On Netflix Dec. 1)

11.19 **KING RICHARD**

This film isn't Shakespearean: it tells the story of Richard Williams (Will Smith), whose relentless motivation and pressure on his daughters Venus and Serena led them from Compton, Calif., to tennis superstardom. (HBO Max)

11.19 **TOP GUN: MAVERICK**

More than three decades after Tom Cruise's *Maverick* took to the skies, he returns to the cockpit—stunts and all. By now, the student has become the teacher; his wards include the progeny (played by Miles Teller) of his late BFF, Goose.

11.24 **HOUSE OF GUCCI**

Lady Gaga takes aim for a second acting Oscar nom with her portrayal of the charismatic, conniving former Gucci adviser Patrizia Reggiani, who was convicted of arranging the assassination of her ex-husband Maurizio Gucci (Adam Driver).

—Andrew R. Chow

As another overabundant TV season begins, networks cancel the comedy

BY JUDY BERMAN

THE PROBLEM WITH TV THESE days, as everyone knows, is that there's too much of it. By the time you clear out last month's backlog of binges, another truckload of content has piled up at your doorstep. Streaming services and, to a lesser extent, traditional networks will maintain that wearying momentum throughout the fall, with a huge variety of new and old programming. In September alone, HBO reboots Ingmar Bergman, Showtime counters with a Rust Belt drama that sounds like *Jeff Daniels of Easttown*, Apple TV+ unveils an elaborate Isaac Asimov adaptation, and PBS has Ken Burns' latest. Meanwhile, FX is front-loading a provocative B.J. Novak project, an ambitious reconsideration of a cult comic-book series and a long-awaited installment of *American Crime Story* that takes on the impeachment of Bill Clinton. Disney+ continues its run of Marvel and *Star Wars* spin-offs. Many buzzy series—including HBO's delightfully excruciating Murdochian satire *Succession*—are due back after lengthy COVID-related hiatuses. America's favorite fictional serial killer Dexter is, for reasons known only to network execs, on the prowl again.

This abundance of shiny new shows makes it easy to overlook what's missing from the upcoming season's prime-time schedule: NBC's venerable Thursday-night comedy block. Anchored in the 1980s by *Cheers* and *The Cosby Show*, then *Friends*, *Seinfeld* and *Frasier* in the '90s, the lineup earned its "Must See TV" branding throughout the late 20th century. Even as appointment viewing waned in subsequent decades, NBC remained an oasis for smart, imaginative sitcoms: *The Office*, *30 Rock*, *Parks and Recreation*, *Community* and, in a last gasp of greatness, *The Good Place* and *Superstore*. That legacy will end on Sept. 16, when the network is set to air the series finale of its long-running cop sitcom *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. Come October, NBC will devote Thursday nights to *Law & Order*, driving scripted comedy off

the prime-time schedule entirely.

Other Big 5 broadcasters seem to be losing faith in comedy series as well. The CW belongs to superheroes, Archie Comics and B-grade nonfiction programming now. Although Fox's Sunday adult-animation block is still going strong, there isn't a single live-action sitcom on its fall schedule. ABC has carved out Wednesday nights for family comedies, but the only "new" title is a *Wonder Years* reboot. CBS seems like a relative haven for the genre, until you realize that one megaproducer, *The Big Bang Theory* bard Chuck Lorre, has a hand in four of its six fall sitcoms. Among the Emmy nominees for Outstanding Comedy Series, only one—ABC's *black-ish*, whose eighth and final season is expected to premiere in 2022—hails from a broadcast network.

Scripted comedy isn't going anywhere. Cable channels and streaming services are bursting with great examples, as multimedia conglomerates like NBCUniversal shift new projects from creators with cult followings (Mike Schur, Tina Fey) to platforms such as Peacock, where they might pay for themselves in subscription dollars. But watching *Hacks* or *Ted Lasso* or *Girls5eva* at your own pace isn't the same experience as ducking into Cheers or Central Perk every Thursday evening and reliving the highlights of each episode at the watercooler Friday morning.

I've been frustrated for a while by the sense that free, linear TV is devolving into nothing more than a way of filling time between commercials. But beyond that, there's something depressing about the distinct possibility that our culture has become so fragmented, with heightened sensitivities on all sides, that large swaths of the American public can't even agree on what's funny anymore. With that in mind, as we continue to feast on all that pay-TV has to offer, let's also pour one out for the kind of show that got tens of millions of us to gather in our living rooms at the same time each week to laugh at the same jokes.

9.2

WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS

The critically beloved vampire comedy based on Taika Waititi and Jemaine Clement's film of the same name returns for a third season of bloody fun. (FX on Hulu)

9.3

MONEY HEIST

One of Netflix's biggest international hits, the Spanish series promises plenty more twists as its drama about a group of robbers comes to a close in its fifth and final season. (Netflix)

9.7

IMPEACHMENT: AMERICAN CRIME STORY

Ryan Murphy's anthology tackles Bill Clinton's impeachment, with Beanie Feldstein as Monica Lewinsky, Sarah Paulson as Linda Tripp, Edie Falco as Hillary Clinton and Clive Owen as the former President. (FX)

9.12

AMERICAN RUST

The drama starring Jeff Daniels as a surly Pennsylvania police chief whose infidelity interferes with a murder investigation exudes *Mare of Easttown* vibes. (Showtime)

9.12

SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE

Oscar Isaac and Jessica Chastain play a couple struggling to stay together in a remake of the 1973 miniseries from legendary filmmaker Ingmar Bergman. (HBO)

9.13

Y: THE LAST MAN

This graphic-novel adaptation asks what would happen if all but one man on earth died: Would the world be a dystopia or utopia? (FX on Hulu)

9.16

THE LOST SYMBOL

Robert Langdon, the symbologist hero of Dan Brown's novels, gets his own origin story. In it, the young academic must solve a series of puzzles to save his mentor. (Peacock)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: HBO; SHOWTIME; HBO; JOHN ROONEY—AP IMAGES/PBS; NETFLIX; HULU

9.16
THE PREMISE

B.J. Novak's modern morality tales explore thorny premises, like what happens when a sex tape might provide evidence in a police abuse case. *(FX on Hulu)*

9.17
THE MORNING SHOW

Julianna Margulies and Hasan Minhaj join Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon and Billy Crudup for a second season of the series about a news program reckoning with a #MeToo scandal. *(Apple TV+)*

9.17
SEX EDUCATION

Girls star Jemima Kirke joins the *Sex Education* cast as the high school's new headmistress trying to rein in some rebellious students. *(Netflix)*

9.19
MUHAMMAD ALI

Famed documentarian Ken Burns endeavors to capture the complex life of the iconic boxer and inspirational activist. *(PBS)*

9.21
OUR KIND OF PEOPLE

Lee Daniels' new drama centers on a rich enclave of Black families in Martha's Vineyard, recalling the soapy pleasures of *Empire*. *(Fox)*

9.22
DEAR WHITE PEOPLE

In its fourth and final season, Justin Simien's campus dramedy will take the form of a '90s-inspired musical. *(Netflix)*

9.22
THE WONDER YEARS

Daniels is also producing a reboot of the classic sitcom, this time centered on a Black preteen in '60s Alabama. Dulé Hill plays the dad; Don Cheadle narrates. *(ABC)*

9.24
FOUNDATION

Lee Pace and Jared Harris star in an adaptation of Isaac Asimov's epic sci-fi story about a galactic empire. *(Apple TV+)*

9.24
MIDNIGHT MASS

The Haunting of Hill House creator Mike Flanagan conjures up another creepy tale, this time about an isolated island beset by supernatural events. *(Netflix)*

9.26
BMF

The 50 Cent-produced drama chronicles the true story of a Detroit criminal empire dubbed the Black Mafia Family. *(Starz)*

October TBA
SUCCESSION

The beloved HBO dramedy about a Murdoch-like family and their squabbles over who will rule their media empire finally returns. *(HBO)*

10.1
MAID

Based on Stephanie Land's popular memoir about poverty in America, *Maid* stars mother and daughter Andie MacDowell and Margaret Qualley. *(Netflix)*

10.3
DOPESICK

Michael Keaton and Rosario Dawson star in the familiar tale of a pharma company starting a drug epidemic by misrepresenting how addictive OxyContin is. *(Hulu)*

10.19
QUEENS

Queens follows a girl group whose members reunite in their 40s to make music again. Real-life '90s icons Eve and Brandy star. *(ABC)*

10.21
THE NEXT THING YOU EAT

Ugly Delicious star and chef David Chang explores the next wave of the food world, from lab-grown fish to insect farms. *(Hulu)*

10.22
INVASION

Inspired by *War of the Worlds*, *Invasion* follows an alien attack from the viewpoints of characters across continents. *(Apple TV+)*

10.29
COLIN IN BLACK & WHITE

Ava DuVernay and Colin Kaepernick team up for a drama based on the football player and activist's teenage years. *(Netflix)*

11.7
DEXTER: NEW BLOOD

Michael C. Hall returns as the incongruously virtuous serial killer in a 10-episode arc set a decade after the events of the original show. *(Showtime)*

11.12
THE SHRINK NEXT DOOR

Based on a true story and hit podcast, Paul Rudd plays a doctor who takes over all decisionmaking powers for his meek patient (Will Ferrell). *(Apple TV+)*

11.19
COWBOY BEBOP

John Cho stars in the live-action adaptation of the beloved Japanese anime series about a ragtag group of bounty hunters chasing criminals across space. *(Netflix)*

11.24
HAWKEYE

The next Marvel Studios show highlights Jeremy Renner's arrow-slinging superhero and his new protégé, played by Hailee Steinfeld. *(Disney+)*

11.25
THE BEATLES: GET BACK

Peter Jackson helms this three-part documentary culled from 60 hours of never-before-seen footage and 150 hours of unheard audio from the band's 1969 recording sessions for *Let It Be*. *(Disney+)*

TBA
THE WHEEL OF TIME

In this adaptation of Robert Jordan's popular fantasy series, Rosamund Pike plays a magician in search of a prophesied chosen one. *(Amazon)*

TBA
MS. MARVEL

Marvel's first Muslim superhero, Kamala Khan, gets her own TV show, about surviving high school, with Iman Vellani starring. *(Disney+)*
—Eliana Dockterman

Clockwise from top: Oscar Isaac and Jessica Chastain in *Scenes From a Marriage*, Jeff Daniels in *American Rust*, Sarah Snook in *Succession*, Muhammad Ali in Ken Burns' new PBS documentary, John Cho in *Cowboy Bebop* and Rosario Dawson in *Dopesick*



The quest to define the quintessential millennial novel

BY ANNABEL GUTTERMAN

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE a millennial? Bards of the generation across disciplines have varied takes: Taylor Swift's catalog proposes a shared identity defined by a fixation on teenage heartbreak. Michaela Coel's TV shows posit a tension between inner trauma and outward behavior. And Sally Rooney's fiction suggests a reliance on the Internet and a defining awareness of the ever nearer end of the world.

These three artists belong to a larger wave of creators who have captured the zeitgeist of what being a millennial means, living at the intersection of pre-occupations both existential and mundane. Their works, as well as the introspective albums of Frank Ocean, Issa Rae's insightful *Insecure*, Lena Dunham's controversial *Girls* and more cultural touchstones from the millennial set, reflect a range of experiences specific to a generation that came of age with the rise of a life lived increasingly online and the growing threats of climate change, gun violence and political polarization.

That edge of pessimism anchors Rooney's best-selling fiction. The Irish writer, 30, a self-proclaimed Marxist, arrived on the scene in 2017 with her debut, *Conversations With Friends*. The book explored the complicated dynamic between two best friends and a married couple, and how their varying intellectual and political beliefs shaped their tensions. *Normal People*, her next novel, followed an on-again, off-again romance between two teenagers into their university years, pulling a thread of domestic violence and female subjugation. Both books feature a detached writing style, details fraught with angst and, perhaps most significantly, refreshingly realistic text-message exchanges between characters enduring quietly tormented love lives. Rooney's new novel, *Beautiful World, Where Are You*, out Sept. 7, is the story of two best friends and the layered anxieties they bring to their relationships—most of which they experience over

the Internet. All of which is to say: her books are light on plot, heavy on inner turmoil, and thus easy for readers to project themselves into.

Her global fan base is clamoring to read *Beautiful World, Where Are You*—with braggy photos of advance reader copies and an exclusive, publisher-issued tote bag popping up on social media to tease the less privileged masses who have to wait for its release. That hype, rare in the publishing world, has roots in her anointment by the mainstream: after the 2018 U.K. release of *Normal People*, the New York Times bestowed Rooney with the weighty designation of “the first great millennial author.”

Her grip on the contemporary fiction market is stunning: *Normal People*, which debuted at No. 3 on the New York Times best-seller list, was adapted into a critically acclaimed TV series for Hulu, and *Conversations With Friends* has its own starry adaptation in the works. *Beautiful World, Where Are You* will be released amid a crowded season full of new books from some of the biggest names in literature, from the late John le Carré to Colson Whitehead and Lauren Groff, yet Rooney's may be the most anticipated of them all—at least for people who live online.

The buzzy arrival of *Beautiful World* raises questions about what makes a great millennial novel and why reading even matters when the world feels like it's hurtling toward self-destruction. Rooney's work fits into a larger landscape of millennial fiction, from Raven Leilani's *Luster* to Ottessa Moshfegh's *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* to Torrey Peters' *Detransition, Baby*. Though their narratives are different, they share a common core: characters grappling with personal crises against the backdrop of a crumbling earth. Millennial art lives in the liminal space between quotidian dilemmas and the fate of humanity. The best of them remind us that two truths can coexist: a breakup can ruin your life even as the planet burns.

9.7

INSEPARABLE

By Simone de Beauvoir

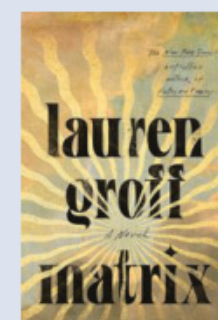
Thirty-five years after the iconic French philosopher's death, her unpublished novel will finally be released to the world. It's a vibrant exploration of female will and friendship in a world that is still, too often, intent on constraining both.

9.7

MISFITS

By Michaela Coel

The creator and star of *I May Destroy You* makes her literary debut with a slim manifesto written with the same perfect balance of sentiment, insight and wit that made viewers fall in love with her on the screen.



9.7

MATRIX

By Lauren Groff

It's the 12th century, and Marie de France has just been ousted from the

royal court and sent to a desolate abbey in England. In charting the teen's plight, the *Fates and Furies* author crafts an electric work of historical fiction.

9.7

POET WARRIOR

By Joy Harjo

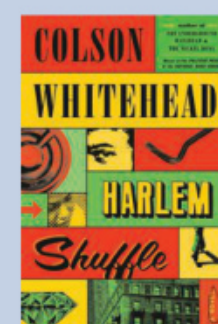
The U.S. poet laureate delivers a soulful and celebratory memoir that, in lyrical terms, tells the story of her relationship to poetry and music.

9.7

ON FREEDOM

By Maggie Nelson

Looking at freedom through the realms of art, sex, drugs and climate, the author of *The Argonauts* explores the contradictions, complexities and rhetoric that surround the term.



9.14

HARLEM SHUFFLE

By Colson Whitehead

Whitehead's latest showcases yet more of his range as a storyteller, following

a furniture salesman leading a double life of crime. It's part

heist novel, part family drama, all set against the rich backdrop of 1960s Harlem.

9.21
THE BOOK OF FORM AND EMPTINESS

By Ruth Ozeki
Deep in grief after the loss of his father, Benny discovers he can hear the voices of objects around him—and there are a lot, given his mother’s hoarding. Ozeki, a practicing Buddhist priest, infuses her story with Zen philosophy while highlighting pressing concerns like climate change and capitalism.

9.28
A CALLING FOR CHARLIE BARNES

By Joshua Ferris
It’s 2008, failed businessman Charlie Barnes has just found out he has pancreatic cancer, and his novelist son Jake has promised to tell his story. But the story we’re reading seems more mythical than real, and we’re left wondering how reliable this narrator is.

**9.28
BELIEVING**
By Anita Hill
Blending memoir with social and cultural analysis, Hill dissects gender-based violence in the U.S. and outlines three decades of history to show how it is a systemic problem in the country.

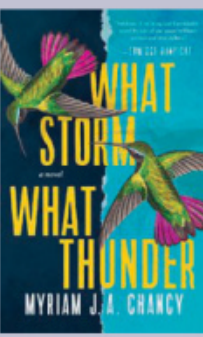
9.28
PLEASE DON’T SIT ON MY BED IN YOUR OUTSIDE CLOTHES

By Phoebe Robinson
Robinson’s third essay collection is the first for her new imprint, Tiny Reparations Books, which promises to highlight diverse voices. The collection captures her signature sense of humor as she reflects on everything from the Black Lives Matter movement to COVID-19 quarantine.

9.28
STONES

By Kevin Young
With his latest poetry collection, Young reminds us of the power of looking back, mining his past, and calling out moments of sorrow

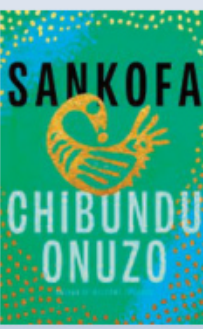
and joy to offer a blistering look at love, loss and everything in between.

**10.5
WHAT STORM, WHAT THUNDER**
By Myriam J.A. Chancy
Drawing from years spent

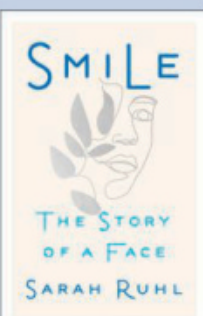
talking to survivors of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Chancy zooms in on its human toll through evocative and unforgettable portraits of 10 interconnected characters whose lives are caught in the wreckage.

10.5
MY MONTICELLO

By Jocelyn Nicole Johnson
The titular novella of Johnson’s daring debut collection centers on a group of neighbors seeking safety in Charlottesville. While fleeing violent white supremacists, the group takes refuge nearby on Thomas Jefferson’s historic plantation. The book is full of stories like this one, concerned with issues surrounding identity and the legacies of slavery and racism.

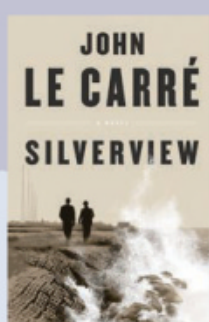
**10.5
SANKOFA**
By Chibundu Onuzo
Facing middle age and some major life changes,

Anna travels to the fictional African country Bamana, where the father she never knew is a polarizing Prime Minister. Her journey sparks an internal reckoning with identity, race, politics and belonging.

**10.5
SMILE**
By Sarah Ruhl
Shortly after giving birth to her twins, playwright Ruhl discovered she could not move the left side of her face. In a series of essays, she takes readers through her Bell’s palsy diagnosis and the decade that followed, recounting her challenges and joys as she searched for a cure.

10.5
THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY

By Amor Towles
Emmett Watson has done 15 months at a juvenile work camp for involuntary manslaughter when he’s released early to deal with a family tragedy and sets his sights on a road trip. Little does he know that two stowaways from the camp are about to change his course.

**10.12
SILVERVIEW**
By John le Carré
When he died last year, legendary British spy novelist le Carré had

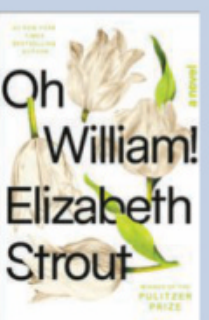
left behind an unpublished full-length novel. *Silverview* follows a bookseller living in a seaside town and the spy chief who arrives to investigate a potential leak.

10.12
DEAR MEMORY

By Victoria Chang
Built on interviews with Chang’s immigrant mother and interwoven with mementos and formal documents, *Dear Memory* is both a chronicling of one family’s history and a powerful, stirring rumination on ancestry, inherited trauma and home.

10.12
STATE OF TERROR

By Hillary Rodham Clinton and Louise Penny
Clinton pairs up with powerhouse mystery novelist Penny to create a heart-pounding thriller about terrorism, corruption and diplomacy, promising details only someone on the inside could contribute.

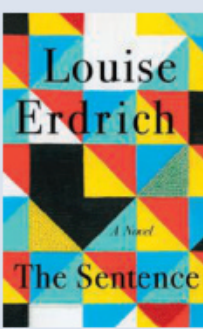
**10.19
OH WILLIAM!**
By Elizabeth Strout
Strout revisits her beloved character Lucy Barton and explores the protagonist’s relationship with her ex-husband. The two have stayed close since their separation—and the discovery of a family secret might just bring them even closer.

11.2
THE ISLAND OF MISSING TREES

By Elif Shafak
Shafak traces the long wake of Kostas and Defne’s love, from their forbidden courtship in the ’70s on the island of Cyprus to 2010s London, where their 16-year-old daughter is frustrated by the secrecy of her family history.

11.2
1000 YEARS OF JOYS AND SORROWS

By Ai Weiwei
In his highly anticipated memoir, the renowned artist and political activist describes his complicated relationship with his home—from his upbringing in exile, to his decision to study art in the U.S., to his return to China as he grew into international fame.

**11.9
THE SENTENCE**
By Louise Erdrich
Tookie, a formerly incarcerated Indigenous woman working at Birchbark

Books (an actual Minneapolis bookshop owned by Erdrich), is now being haunted—literally—by one of the store’s most annoying customers, a recently deceased white woman who was obsessed with claiming Native American ancestry.

**11.9
FIVE TUESDAYS IN WINTER**
By Lily King
In her first collection of short stories, King explores

the highs and lows of human connection, tracing characters longing for love and wrestling with change.

11.9
MY BODY

By Emily Ratajkowski
Ratajkowski brings nuanced insight to questions about empowerment vs. commodification of women’s bodies in her debut collection of essays on sexuality, power and abuse.
—A.G. and Arianna Rebolini



11.19
**RED (TAYLOR'S
VERSION),
TAYLOR SWIFT**

Music

Swift rerecords her evocative, postadolescent second album in her ongoing project to control her masters

9.14
DEATHLOOP

Video game

Set on a gorgeous, mysterious island, Arkane Studios' new action game puts players on a quest to interrupt a time loop by eliminating its creators without first getting offed by a rival



11.2
**OTTOLENGHI TEST
KITCHEN: SHELF LOVE,
YOTAM OTTOLENGHI AND
NOOR MURAD**

Cookbook

The prolific cookbook author, with collaborator Murad, helps home cooks get creative with what's already in the pantry



11.5
THANK YOU, DIANA ROSS

Music

A legend returns with her 25th solo album and first original music of the 21st century, with a 2022 tour planned to take the songs on the road



9.28
BOOK NERD

Puzzle

Whether we're locked down by force or by choice, our puzzling habit finds a new outlet in this 1,000-piece ode to literature from Workman's massively popular line

10.26
**30 DAYS OF
CREATIVITY,
JOHANNA BASFORD**

Coloring book

The fervor over adult coloring books may have subsided slightly, but a new offering from best-selling superstar Johanna Basford is reason enough to pick up the colored pencils

The season's other most enticing offerings

OUR CULTURAL CONSUMPTION HAS become, in a word, unpredictable: movies postponed, albums dropped without warning. Who knows what shape our next obsession will take? Here, we share just a few more of the ways we'll be spending our downtime this fall—honing cooking skills while humming along to Spacey Kacey before settling into an evening of puzzling and exploring vast desert landscapes with a controller.

9.23
SABLE

Video game

In this exploration game, the player guides a young girl, the titular Sable, on her hoverbike across gorgeous desert landscapes inspired by Studio Ghibli movies

10.1
**IN THESE
SILENT DAYS,
BRANDI CARLILE**

Music

The musician continues a fruitful year (two Grammys, one best-selling memoir) with her seventh album

9.17
MONTERO, LIL NAS X

Music

More than two years after the "Old Town Road" phenomenon and after a summer of Internet-breaking music videos, the rapper drops his debut album, titled for his birth name



9.28
**NO ONE GOES
ALONE,
ERIK LARSON**

Audiobook

The acclaimed nonfiction writer debuts his first work of fiction, a ghost story, as an exclusive audiobook

9.10
**STAR CROSSED,
KACEY MUSGRAVES**

Music

The singer-songwriter describes her fifth studio album, to be accompanied by a film, as a deeply personal "modern-day tragedy in three acts"



8 Questions

Bill T. Jones The 69-year-old choreographer and artistic director on performing again, *Moby Dick* and why he doesn't call his work *dance*

You're still clearly burning to create after many years. How do you keep that fire stoked?

When I am moved by a work of art, when I'm moved by a political situation, I immediately begin to think in my language: movement, space and time. So it is still helping me understand how to live. Not to mention that I have a company that must be fed. We're still fighting for the importance of this art form in public life.

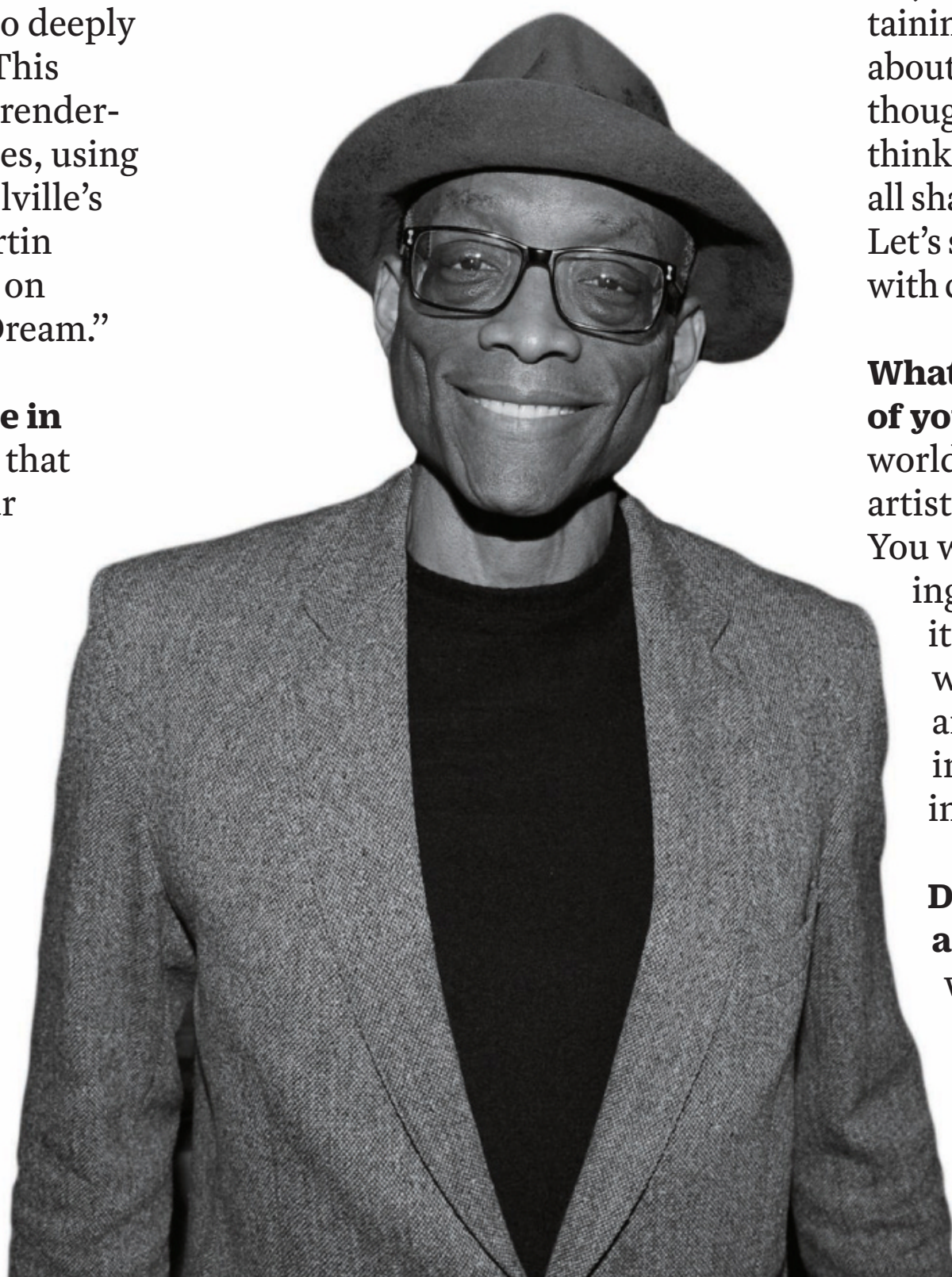
One of the concerns of your new piece, *Deep Blue Sea*, is "the pursuit of an elusive we." What does that mean?

We the People, we shall overcome, we hold these truths. That is part of everyday parlance, and it's quite irritating. I am a Black American who truly grew up thinking that we shall overcome, that there was a *we* that transcended ethnicity and race. And the more I have lived, the more I see those things are so deeply entrenched. So what's this *we*? This piece is a poem, a metaphorical rendering of wrestling with those stories, using iconographic texts: Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Chapter 93, and Martin Luther King's 1963 great March on Washington speech, "I Have a Dream."

What do those two things have in common? They are iconic texts that define the American sense of our community. Both those documents have grown dusty, taken for granted. And they must be returned to regularly.

Mark Morris said, "I can be daunting, because I'm scared to death." Can you relate to that? I can relate very well. I come from field-workers, people who understood they are not that far off from the lash. I tried to explain this to my dancers. The young say, "That's *your* pathology." I had young Black people say to me a few years ago, jokingly, but

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I think they were nudging me, "We need to take a Black power nap."

You're performing with your own company for the first time in 15 years.

Why now? I am probably as much an intellectual speaking presence now as I am a dancing presence. But I don't want to yet give up the fact that the young people in the company and I are bodies together making a body-based art form. It's hard, but I have to try one more time. Can I sweat with them? Can I learn something? For me. For them.

You don't like to call what you do *dance*.

Why? I feel that dance in the culture is very close to mime. People feel it is an indulgence, something esoteric, or little girls in pink. That's not what I'm doing. I'm doing a body-based investigation of artmaking. You have to find a whole other way to talk about it. It's not about entertaining you, although it can be. It's not about getting you sexually aroused, although it can be. It's trying to really rethink what this basic instrument that we all share is capable of: two arms, two legs. Let's see, if we get together in a community with clear instructions: What happens?

What would the 70-year-old version of you tell the 20-year-old? First, the world does not care if you want to be an artist. You will always be full of doubt. You will very likely never make a satisfying living. You may get hurt. And yet, it is exhilarating. When it works, when you are firing on all cylinders, and there is a population that is leaning in to see, that can be rewarding in a way you can't imagine.

Do you mourn the ability to dance as you used to? I do sometimes

wish I had that motor I used to have; the impulse to move, the will to move and the ability to move are all one when you're young. Now it has to be more thought about, which is its own kind of goal. —BELINDA LUSCOMBE

CHINA WATCH

PRESENTED BY CHINA DAILY 中國日報

A sea of possibility

UNESCO recognizes importance of port that was once known the world over

BY WANG KAIHAO

It is said that Jiuri Mountain was where the early migrants in the third century from North China to Quanzhou, Fujian province, climbed and, facing north, were overcome by nostalgia as they gazed in the direction of their war-torn home.

But times change, and centuries later, their descendants, during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), went to the mountain summit but this time their gaze was in the opposite direction.

Their focus was on the ocean and the dreams it inspired. They prayed for a propitious wind and wished for safe passage for the merchant ships, which secured the harbor city's prosperity.

The prayers on the summit survive and can be seen in the 10 red cliff inscriptions, dating from 1174 to 1266. Many more inscriptions are believed to have once existed.

As shown by ancient documents, local governors of the Song Dynasty would lead a group of officials and members of the royal clan to make sacrificial offerings to a temple on the mountain every summer and winter. They wanted the monsoon to sail the ships to their destinations and arrive safe and sound.

The Jiuri Mountain Wind-Praying Inscriptions is one of the



22 components of "Quanzhou: Emporium of the World in Song-Yuan China", which was inscribed onto the World Heritage List on July 25 during the 44th Session of the World Heritage Committee, hosted in Fuzhou, Fujian province.

In the eyes of scholars, these precious stone inscriptions are not just a historical archive providing a reliable meteorological record.

"They also reflect the state power and a national-level system of the Song Dynasty to promote, manage and control maritime trade," said Fu Jing, deputy director at the Institute of Architectural History, which is linked to the China Architecture Design and Research Group.

"The 22 components cannot be seen as 22 scattered spots," she said. "They are closely linked to one another, functionally, spatially and culturally, and jointly exhibit the key attributes of Quanzhou's regional economic and social system shaped by the surging wave of world maritime trade."



Top: A Song Dynasty (960-1279) shipwreck at the city's Maritime Museum. WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY
Above: Site of the Southern Clan Office, excavated in 2019, an agency crucial for maritime trade during the Song Dynasty. WANG JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

The historic sites include administrative buildings, the city's infrastructure, such as gates and walls, religious sites that marked multicultural communities,

production sites for ceramics and iron, as well as a transportation network formed by bridges, docks and pagodas.

Consensus was reached between the authorities and the general public during the Song Dynasty to make full use of maritime trade, Fu said, because tense relations between the dynasty and its neighbors to the north made cross-border trading routes on land unstable.

"The focus of development thus shifted toward the ocean," she said.

After the Song Dynasty lost half its territory and entered the Southern Song period (1127-1279), maritime trade became even more crucial to prolong its rule.

A historic opportunity came upon Quanzhou. From the 10th to 14th centuries, global maritime trade experienced a remarkable period of prosperity.

The city, known as Zayton overseas, boomed and surpassed Guangzhou, in today's Guangdong province, to become the country's biggest harbor in the early 13th century. This upward trend continued into the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) as its Mongol rulers also upheld the national policy to support thriving maritime trade.

The 14th-century Moroccan explorer, Ibn Battuta, wrote: "The harbor of Zayton is among the biggest in the world, or rather the biggest."

In 1087 the Maritime Trade Office was set up by the Song Dynasty government in Quanzhou. Mixing present-day customs, administration of foreign trade licenses, exchange for imported goods, and a reception agency for foreign diplomats, the office was extraordinarily busy.

"Its establishment marked the



Quanzhou enjoyed lucrative maritime trade from the 10th to 14th centuries.
CHENG DONGDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



An aerial view of Quanzhou city at sunrise. CHEN YINGJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

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WANG BO, RESEARCHER
AT THE INSTITUTE OF
ARCHAEOLOGY, CHINESE
ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

official designation of Quanzhou as a national-level seaport for overseas trade,” said Wang Bo, a researcher at the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

“On its best days the office alone contributed about 7% of the country’s total

annual tax revenue during the Southern Song period, which is astonishing.”

Wang led a group of archaeologists to search for its ruins in 2019. He was surprised to find that spatial patterns of ancient Quanzhou rigidly followed feng shui theory and traditional Chinese urban design. Comprehensive research of these ideas, which reflect the relationship between the city’s residents and their environment, helped him to review how the city’s layout was originally planned and, last year, finally dig out architectural ruins of a high-level ancient office building. Bricks were later unearthed with inscriptions to further prove it was the Maritime Trade Office.

“Thanks to this office, Quanzhou maintained a stable relationship with the overseas market,” Wang said. “And as a reflection of Chinese philosophy, which has lasted for millennia, it is also a reminder for today’s people to better protect our cultural heritage.”

A similar working process also enabled his team to

find and excavate the site of the Southern Clan Office in 2019, another agency crucial for maritime trade during the Song Dynasty.

The office was set up in 1102 in present-day Henan province to take care of royal kinsmen. After the fall of Henan to the Jurchen, the office, along with some members of the royal family, moved to South China until it was finally relocated to Quanzhou in 1130.

Zhou Zhenping, deputy mayor of Quanzhou, said it marked a pivotal moment in the history of Quanzhou.

“The Song royal clan engaged in social and business affairs in Quanzhou. They helped the high-end markets of the city blossom, as consumers of spices and jewels, thus greatly stimulated imports.

“Some became government officials, including head of the Maritime Trade Office, making great contributions to the development of the port and other infrastructure.”

Hu Meidong contributed to this story.

DEVELOPMENT OF QUANZHOU
AND ITS GROWTH INTO
A HUB OF MARITIME TRADE

• Third to sixth centuries

Due to continuous war in North China, people of the Jin Dynasty (265-420) move south to what is present-day Quanzhou and settle along the river, naming it Jinjiang River in tribute to their homeland.

• Between 618 and 626

Two disciples of Muhammad introduce Islam to Quanzhou. They are buried there. The place is known as the “graveyard of Muslim saints”.

• 686

Kaiyuan Temple, the most important Buddhist temple in the city, is built, adopting its current name in 738.

• 700

The seat of Quanzhou government moves to the historical quarter of the present-day city.

• Between 946 and 962

Pottery, bronze and ironware are exported in exchange for gold and other treasures. The city is also expanded and *Erythrina* trees (known as zayton in local dialect) are widely planted. Some refer to Quanzhou as Zayton as a result.

• 1009

Ashab Mosque (or the Mosque of Holy Friends), which is known as Qingjing Mosque today, is built by Arab Muslims.

• 1087

The royal court of the Song Dynasty (960-1279) establishes the

Maritime Trade Office in Quanzhou to oversee trade affairs.

• 1130

The Southern Clan Office, which oversees issues related to the royal family, is relocated to Quanzhou.

• 1174

The earliest known wind-praying ritual is held at Jiuri Mountain.

• 1206

Documents show that Quanzhou maintained trade relations with 31 countries and regions around the world.

• 1225

Documents show that Quanzhou enjoyed communication with 58 countries and regions.

• 1291

Marco Polo escorts Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) princess Kokachin to marry the Prince of Ilkhanate on a voyage that starts from Quanzhou.

• 1346

Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta hails Quanzhou as one of the largest ports in the world.

• 1349

Records show that Quanzhou maintained trade relations with nearly 100 countries and regions.

• 1370

Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) royal court restricts Quanzhou’s trade with present-day Okinawa, marking the decline of Quanzhou’s status as a trading hub.

SOURCE: QUANZHOU MARITIME MUSEUM

CHINA WATCH

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Above and right: The green peafowl, China's native pheasant species, is under top-level protection as efforts are stepped up to boost numbers. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Campaign to protect endangered peafowl given greater impetus

BY YANG WANLI
and LI YINGQING

The pheasant occupies a privileged position in China, inspiring numerous poems, paintings and songs in ancient times.

It is also believed to be linked to the mythical phoenix, which in Chinese legend was nicknamed the king of birds.

Han Lianxian, an ornithologist at Southwest Forestry University in Kunming, Yunnan province, said: "Many Chinese people have seen pheasants. However, few have witnessed China's native pheasant species — the green peafowl, which has incredibly beautiful tail feathers and is now under top-level protection."

Blue peafowl are commonly seen in zoos and parks, Han said, adding that as China's only native pheasant, green peafowl (*Pavo muticus*) are bigger and have yellow cheeks and shiny green neck feathers.

However, the beauty of the green peafowl has become its major threat. Males are hunted for their extravagant tail feathers. Eggs and chicks are also sought for illegal trade, and some of the birds have been poisoned by farmland pesticides.

The population of the species has declined significantly throughout East Asia since the turn of the century and is now only reported in scattered



LIFE-THREATENING BEAUTY OF THE BIRD KING

locations in a few countries.

The green peafowl is among the most-threatened pheasants in the world. Its plight was highlighted in the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Pheasant Action Plan, in which it was listed as one of the highest priorities for conservation. There are an estimated 15,000 to 30,000 of the birds worldwide.

According to the Yunnan Forestry and Grassland Administration, there are 555 to 600 of the birds in the province.

Han, one of the country's top experts on birds, has worked in wilderness areas for decades but has only observed a green peafowl in the wild once. Recalling this unexpected encounter, he said the beautiful bird left a deep impression on him.

In 2002 Han was working on field research at Xiaoheshan Provincial Nature Reserve in Longling county. He had just left

the reserve's forest station early in the morning and was walking along a forest path when he heard the cries of green peafowl.

"It was a male green peafowl, which is quick and alert. I was stunned by its bluish-green tail feathers, which shone like jade in the sunlight. It was at that moment that you knew it was the 'king of birds.'"

China is stepping up efforts to boost the endangered green peafowl population by providing the birds with a natural breeding ground in Yunnan. In recent years local authorities, scientific institutions and public welfare organizations have strengthened efforts to revive the species.

On March 20 last year a court ordered construction of a hydropower station to be suspended because of the damage the project was likely to inflict on the birds' habitats. The ruling marked a significant

step in the country's ecological conservation efforts.

Yang Xiaojun, an ornithologist at the Kunming Institute of Zoology, a branch of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said there are several reasons for the decline of the species.

According to surveys carried out by the institute, the species survives in 22 counties in Yunnan.

"Agricultural expansion, habitat loss and illegal hunting have all played a part in the decline of the species," Yang said. "One of the main challenges facing green peafowl conservation is that more than 65% of the birds now live outside nature reserves."

River valleys with gentle slopes, along with tropical monsoon forests, offer the birds humidity, sufficient food, water and open space, making such areas ideal habitats for the species, Han said. Recent research has also found that the birds can

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WE GOT SCIENTISTS AND LOCAL RESIDENTS INVOLVED AND ESTABLISHED CORRIDORS IN SMALL AREAS OF HABITAT FOR RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES, FORMING A PROTECTION NET.”

HAN LIANXIAN, ORNITHOLOGIST AT SOUTHWEST FORESTRY UNIVERSITY IN KUNMING, YUNNAN



A ranger learns how to use infrared cameras to protect the green peafowl in its habitat in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

live in mountains where there is some open ground.

From 2016 to last year the Yunnan forestry department intensified efforts to protect the green peafowl and its habitat. It also conducted regular surveillance patrols in the birds' habitats, cracking down on illegal hunting and trade in the species.

In Xinping county, an important habitat for the species, the head of the local forestry department has led a green peafowl protection group since 2018. Over the past three years more than 6,000 leaflets and more than 40,000 brochures on safeguarding the species have been distributed to residents.

In 2018 the county set up a long-term surveillance project, organizing a 25-strong patrol team. Three green peafowl observation stations have been built and 106 infrared surveillance cameras installed in the forest.

A captive-breeding program has begun, an important step in increasing the green peafowl population and saving the species from extinction.

In 2019, with help from the Kunming Institute of Zoology, workers started artificially breeding 21 green peafowl. By the end of that year more than 170 eggs were produced, with 24 of them hatching successfully.

Yang said this initial success inspired researchers to carefully plan efforts to boost the green peafowl population, adding: "The success of the captive-breeding program offers new hope for the survival of one of the world's most-threatened pheasants."

However, problems have been reported with the program. Han said DNA tests showed that many newborns were not pure-bred green peafowl, but the reason for this remains a mystery.

Yang Xing, head of the Birds Observation Association in Yuxi, said a survey over a year that was started in April last year found that isolated habitats are a major crisis for the green peafowl.

"Habitats that used to be connected are now isolated by human activities, villages, roads and farmland. A lack of mating opportunities across different groups has resulted in an increasing number of newborns with physiological defects and a low hatching rate."

Green peafowl in Jinghong, Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, more than 250 miles from the species' major groups in Yuxi, have experienced birth defects among their newborns in recent years, according to the survey.

As green peafowl habitats are scattered across the province, Han and his team have been trying to link them by creating tree belts to provide a natural breeding ground for the birds.

"We got scientists and local residents involved and established corridors in small areas of habitat for rare and endangered species, forming a protection net," Han said, explaining that the corridors consist of the green peafowl's favorite plants.

Machines that helped give athletes the winning edge

BY CHENG YU

Technology was at the forefront of China's strong presence at the Olympics Games in Tokyo, as artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies played a significant role in helping the country's athletes in training and improving their performance.

Pongbot, an AI-enabled table tennis robot, has become a popular training apparatus at the national training base for table tennis players, making high-quality shots and never running out of energy.

The robot can also adjust the speed and spin of the ball according to a player's level of aptitude. Through big data it can gather and analyze the trajectory and movement of different athletes and simulate competitors' movements to help them in training.

"The AI robot no doubt replaces some of the work for coaches, especially when we have to take care of several tables during training," said Chen Bin, deputy dean of China Table Tennis College and coach of the retired table tennis world champion Ding Ning.

Pongbot, co-developed by China Table Tennis College and Siasun Robot & Automation Co., is believed by many industry insiders to be the world's first AI ball-pitching robot.

"More importantly, it can also imitate the course of different players that human training partners usually find hard, for instance that of the Japanese player Ito Mima," Chen said. "With this we can offer more targeted

training to our athletes."

In sports including volleyball, running, swimming, rowing and weightlifting, many of the country's athletes have adopted high-tech training methods.

China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) highlighted the important role of technologies in driving the digitalization of key areas including sports. A paper published by the State Council on the high-quality development of sports said the country will accelerate the application of smart manufacturing, big data and AI in sports.

Quan Hongchan, 14, a gold-medal-winning diver at the Tokyo Games, said on her Weibo account that behind her success was not only her own efforts, but also the three-dimensional AI training system of the national diving team.

The advanced system, developed by the internet company Baidu Inc., restructures the three-dimensional body posture of divers when they stand at the springboard. This information is sent to coaches in real time.

The China Academy of Aerospace Electronics Technology also helped six world swimming champions by using precision measurements during their preparations for the Tokyo Olympics.

Its waterproof measurement device weighs only about half an ounce and can gather data on a swimmer's posture, breathing and stroke frequency within a second, as well as turning times and other technical metrics.



Pongbot, co-developed by China Table Tennis College and Siasun Robot & Automation Co., on display at the China International Patent Fair in Dalian, Liaoning province, in November.

GAO QIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Elegance is an attitude

Kate Winslet
Kate Winslet

LONGINES



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